

THE PALISER CASE

BY EDGAR SALTUS

HISTORIA AMORIS

IMPERIAL PURPLE

MARY MAGDALEN

THE POMPS OF SATAN

THE LORDS OF THE GHOSTLAND

DAUGHTERS OF THE RICH

In preparation

SCAFFOLDS AND ALTARS

THE PALISER CASE

BY
EDGAR SALTUS



BONI AND LIVERIGHT
NEW YORK 1919

*Then headlong down the stair of life he fell, while up
that stairway others laughed and mounted and all were
drunken with the wine of youth.*

COPYRIGHT, 1919,
BY EDGAR SALTUS

Printed in the U. S. A.

THE PALISER CASE

I

THE murder of Monty Paliser, headlined that morning in the papers, shook the metropolis at breakfast, buttered the toast, improved the taste of the coffee.

Murdered! It seemed too bad to be false. Moreover, there was his picture, the portrait of a young man obviously high-bred and insolently good-looking. In addition to war news and the financial page, what more could you decently ask for a penny? Nothing, perhaps, except the address of the murderer. But that detail, which the morning papers omitted, extras shortly supplied. Meanwhile in the minds of imaginative New Yorkers, visions of the infernal feminine surged. The murdered man's name was evocative.

His father, Montagu Paliser, generally known as M. P., had lived in that extensive manner in which New York formerly took an indignant delight. Behind him, extending back to the remotest past when Bowling Green was the centre of fashion, always there had been a Paliser, precisely as there has always been a Livingston. These people and a dozen others formed the landed gentry—a gentry otherwise landed since. But not the Paliser clan. The original Paliser was very wealthy. All told he had a thousand dollars. Montagu Paliser, the murdered man's father, had

stated casually, as though offering unimportant information, that, by Gad, sir, you can't live like a gentleman on less than a thousand dollars a day. That was years and years ago. Afterward he doubled his estimate. Subsequently, he quadrupled it. It made no hole in him either. In spite of his yacht, his racing stable, his town house, his country residences and formerly in the great days, or rather in the great nights, his ladies of the ballet, in spite of these incidentals his wealth increased. No end to it, is about the way in which he was currently quoted.

All New Yorkers knew him, at any rate by repute, precisely as the least among us knows Mr. Carnegie, though perhaps more intimately. The tales of his orgies, of his ladies, of that divorce case and of the yacht scandal which burst like a starball, tales Victorian and now legendary, have, in their mere recital, made many an old reprobate's mouth champagne. But latterly, during the present generation that is, the ineffable Paliser—M. P. for short—who, with claret liveries and a yard of brass behind him had tooled his four-in-hand, or else, in his superb white yacht, gave you something to talk about, well, from living very extensively he had renounced the romps and banalities of this life.

Old reprobates could chuckle all they liked over the uproar he had raised in the small and early family party that social New York used to be. But in club windows there were no new tales of him to tell. Like a potentate outwearied with the circumstance of State, he had chucked it, definitely for himself, and recently in favour of his son, Monty, who, in the month of March, 1917, arrived from Havana at the family residence, which in successive migrations had moved,

as the heart of Manhattan has moved, from the neighbourhood of the Battery to that of the Plaza.

In these migrations the Palisers had not derogated from their high estate. Originally, one of the first families here, the centuries, few but plural, had increased what is happily known as their prestige. Monty Paliser was conscious of that, but not unwholesomely. The enamellings that his father had added gave him no concern whatever. On the contrary. He knew that trade would sack the Plaza, as long since it had razed the former citadels of fashion, and he foresaw the day when the family residence, ousted from upper Fifth Avenue, would be perched on a peak of Washington Heights, where the Palisers would still be among the first people in New York—to those coming in town that way.

That result it was for him to insure. Apart from second cousins, to whom he had never said a word and never proposed to address, apart from them, apart too from his father and himself, there was only his sister, Sally Balaguine, who, one night, had gone to bed in Petersburg and, on the morrow, had awakened in Petrograd. Though, in addition to this much surprised lady, before whose eyes Petrograd subsequently dissolved into Retrograd and afterward into delirium, there was her son, a boy of three. Mme. Balaguine's prince did not count, or rather had ceased to. As lieutenant of the guards he had gone to the front where a portion of him had been buried, the rest having been minutely dispersed.

To perpetuate the clan in its elder branch, there was therefore but this young man, a circumstance which, on his return from Havana, his father advanced.

They were then at luncheon. For the father there was biscuit and milk. For the son there was an egg cooked in a potato. Yet, in the kitchen, or, if not there, somewhere about, were three chefs. Moreover on the walls were Beauvais. The ceiling was the spoil of a Venetian palace. The luncheon however simple was not therefore disagreeable.

With an uplift of the chin, the elder man flicked a crumb and sat back. The action was a signal. Three servants filed out.

Formerly his manner had been cited and imitated. To many a woman it had been myrrh and cassia. It had been deadly nightshade as well. After a fashion of long ago, he wore a cavalry moustache which, once black, now was white. He was tall, bald, very thin. But that air of his, the air of one accustomed to immediate obedience, yet which could be very urbane and equally insolent, that air endured.

In sitting back he looked at his son for whom he had no affection. For no human being had he ever had any affection, except for himself, and latterly even that unique love had waned.

The chefs, originally retained on shifts of eight hours each, in order that this man might breakfast or sup whenever he so desired, that he might breakfast, as a gentleman may, at four in the afternoon, or sup at seven in the morning, these chefs were useless. His wife, who had died, not as one might suppose of a broken heart but of fatty degeneration, had succumbed to their delicately toxic surprises with groans but also with thanksgiving.

That is ancient history. At present her widower supped on powdered charcoal and breakfasted on bismuth. The cooks he still retained, not to prepare these

triumphs, but for the benefit of his heir, for whom he had no affection but whom he respected as the next incumbent and treated accordingly, that is to say, as one gentleman treats another.

On this high noon, when the servants had gone, the father sat back and looked at his son, who, it then occurred to him, astonishingly resembled his mother. He had the same eyes, too big, too blue; the same lashes, too long, too dark; the same ears, too small and a trifle too far forward. In addition he had the same full upper-lip, the same cleft in the chin, the same features refined almost to the point of degeneracy. But the ensemble was charming—too charming, as was his voice, which he had acquired at Oxford where, at the House, he had studied, though what, except voice culture, one may surmise and never know. Men generally disliked him and accounted the way he spoke, or the way he looked, the reason. But what repelled them was probably his aura of which, though unaware, they were not perhaps unconscious.

His father motioned: "Thank God, you are here. At any moment now we may be in it and you will have to go. You are not a divinity student and you cannot be a slacker."

The old man paused and added: "Meanwhile you will have to marry. If anything should happen to you, there would be but Sally and the Balaguine brat and I shouldn't like that. God knows why I care, but I do. There has always been a Paliser here and it is your turn now—which reminds me. I have made over some property to you. You would have had it any way, but the transfer will put you on your feet, besides saving the inheritance tax."

"Thank you. What is it?"

"The Place, the Wall Street and lower Broadway property, that damned hotel and the opera-box. Jeroloman wrote you about it. Didn't you get his letter?"

"I may have. I don't know that I read it."

"When you have a moment look in on him. He will tell you where you are."

"And where is that?"

The old man summarised it. Even with the increased cost of matrimony, it was enough for a Mormon, for a tribe of them. But the young man omitted to say so. He said nothing.

His father nodded at him. "You think marriage a nuisance. So it is. So is everything. By Gad, sir, I wish I were well out of it. I go nowhere—not even to church. I have grown thin through the sheer nuisance of things. But if nothing happens over there and you don't make a mess of it, the next twenty years of your life ought not to be profoundly disagreeable. Now I dislike to be a nuisance myself, but in view of the war, it is necessary that there should be another Paliser, if not here, at least en route."

"I will think it over," said this charming young man, who had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

"The quicker the better then, and while you are at it select a girl with good health and no brains. They wear best. I did think of Margaret Austen for you, but she has become engaged. Lennox his name is. Her mother told me. Told me too she hated it. Said you must come to dinner and she'd have a girl or two for you to look at. Oblige me by going. Plenty of others though. Girls here are getting healthier and stupider and uglier every year. By Gad, sir, I remember——"

The old man rambled on. He was back in the days

when social New York foamed with beauty, when it held more loveliness to the square inch than any other spot on earth. He was back in the days when Fifth Avenue was an avenue and not a ghetto.

With an air of interest the young man listened. The air was not feigned. Yet what interested him was not the outworn tale but the pathological fact that the reminiscences of the aged are symptomatic of hardening of the arteries.

Mentally he weighed his father, gave him a year, eighteen months, and that, not because he was anxious for his shoes, but out of sheer diletantism.

The idea that his father would survive him, that it was he who was doomed, that already behind the curtains of life destiny was staging his death—and what a death!—he could no more foresee than he foresaw the Paliser Case, which, to the parties subsequently involved, was then unimaginable, yet which, at that very hour, a court of last resort was deciding.

He looked over at his father. "Palmerston asked everybody, particularly when he didn't know them from Adam, 'How's the old complaint?' How is yours?"

With that air that had won so many hearts, and broken them too, the old man smiled.

"When I don't eat anything and sit perfectly still, it is extraordinary how well I feel."

How he felt otherwise, he omitted to state. A gentleman never talks of disagreeable matters.

II

IN the shouted extras that succeeded the initial news of the murder, Margaret Austen was mentioned, not as the criminal, no one less criminal than the girl could be imagined, but as being associated with the parties involved.

That was her misfortune and a very grievous misfortune, though, however grievous, it was as nothing to other circumstances for which she subsequently blamed herself, after having previously attributed them to fate, or rather, as fate is more modernly known, to karma.

Any belief may console. A belief in karma not only consoles, it explains. As such it is not suited to those who accept things on faith, which is a very good way to accept to them. It may be credulous to believe that Jehovah dictated the ten commandments. But the commandments are sound. Moreover it is perhaps better to be wrong in one's belief's than not to have any.

Margaret Austen believed in karma and in many related and wonderful things. Her face showed it. It showed other things; appreciation, sympathy, unworldliness, good-breeding and that minor charm that beauty is. It showed a girl good to look at, good through and through; a girl tall, very fair, who smiled readily, rarely laughed and never complained.

It is true that at the time this drama begins it would

have been captious of her to have complained of anything were it not that life is so ordered that it has sorrow for shadow. The shadow on this human rose was her mother.

Mrs. Austen had seen worse days and never proposed to see them again. Among the chief assets of her dear departed was a block of New Haven. The stock, before collapsing, shook. Then it tripped, fell and kept at it. Through what financial clairvoyance the dear departed's trustee got her out, just in time, and, quite illegally but profitably, landed her in Standard Oil is not a part of this drama. But meanwhile she had shuddered. Like many another widow, to whom New Haven was as good as Governments, she might have been in the street. Pointing at her had been that spectre—Want!

It was just that which she never proposed to see again. The spectre in pointing had put a mark on this woman who was arrogant, ambitious and horribly shrewd.

A tall woman with a quick tongue, a false front, an air of great affability and, when on parade, admirably sent out, she ruled her daughter, or thought she did, which is not quite the same thing.

Margaret Austen was ruled by her conscience and her beautiful beliefs. These were her masters. This human rose was their lovely slave. But latterly a god had enthralled her. It was with wonder and thanksgiving that she recognised the overlordship of that brat of a divinity, whom poets call Eros, and thinkers the Genius of the Species.

Mrs. Austen, who had danced many a time before his shrine, had no objection whatever to the godlet, except only when he neglected to appear Olympianly,

as divinity should, with a nimbus of rentrolls and gold.

In view of the fact that he had come to Margaret in déshabille, that is to say without any discernible nimbus, he affronted Mrs. Austen's ambitious eyes.

Of that she said nothing to Margaret. But at dinner one evening she summarised it to Peter Verelst who sat at her right.

The room, which was furnished with tolerable taste, gave on Park Avenue where she resided. At her left was Monty Paliser. Farther down were Margaret, Lennox and Kate Schermerhorn. Coffee had been served. Paliser was talking to Miss Schermerhorn; Lennox to Margaret.

"I don't like it," Mrs. Austen said evenly to Peter Verelst. "But what can I do?"

Peter Verelst was an old New Yorker and an old beau. Mrs. Austen had known him when she was in shorter frocks than those then in vogue. Even as a child she had been ahead of the fashion.

"Do?" Verelst repeated. "Do nothing."

"I am a snob," she resumed, expecting him to contradict her. "I did hope that Margaret, with her looks, would marry brilliantly."

Peter Verelst bent over his coffee. "The young man next door?"

Out of the corner of an eye Mrs. Austen glanced at Paliser and then back at Verelst. "Well, something of the kind."

Verelst raised his cup. He had known Lennox' father. He knew and liked the son. For Margaret he had an affection that was almost—and which might have been—paternal. But, noting the barometer, he steered into the open.

"Have Lennox here morning, noon and night. See to it that Margaret has every opportunity to get sick to death of him. Whereas if you interfere——"

Mrs. Austen, as though invoking the saints, lifted her eyes. "Ah, I know! If I had not been interfered with I would not have taken Austen. Much good it did me!"

Verelst, his hand on the tiller, nodded. "There you are! That locksmith business is very sound. Love revels in it. But give him his head and good-bye. Sooner or later he is bound to take to his heels, but, the more he is welcomed, the sooner he goes. The history of love is a history of farewells."

Paliser, who had caught the last phrase, felt like laughing and consequently looked very serious. The spectacle of two antiques discussing love seemed to him as hilarious as two paupers discussing wealth. He patted his tie.

"Very interesting topic, Mrs. Austen."

The woman smiled at him. "Love? Yes. How would you define it?"

Paliser returned her smile. "A mutual misunderstanding."

Mrs. Austen's smile deepened. "Would you like to have one?"

"With your daughter, yes."

Et moi donc! thought this lady, who, like others of our aristocracy, occasionally lapsed into French. But she said: "Why not enter the lists?"

"I thought they were closed."

"Are they ever?"

But now Verelst addressed the too charming young man. "How is your father?"

"In his usual poor health, thank you."

"What does he say about the war?"

"Nothing very original—that the Kaiser ought to be sent to Devil's Island. But that I told him would be an insult to Dreyfus, who was insulted enough. The proper place for the beast is the zoo. At the same time, the fellow is only a pawn. The blame rests on Rome—rests on her seven hills."

Verelst drew back. In the great days, or more exactly in the great nights, he had been a pal of M. P. That palship he had no intention of extending to M. P.'s son, and it was indifferently that he asked: "In what way?"

Kate Schermerhorn, who had been talking to Margaret and to Lennox, turned. Lennox also had turned. Paliser had the floor, or rather the table. He made short work of it.

"It was Cæsar's policy to create a solitude and call it peace. That policy Rome abandoned. Otherwise, that is if she had continued to turn the barbarians into so many dead flies, their legs in the air, there would be no barbarian now on the throne of Prussia. There would be no Prussia, no throne, no war."

You ought to write for the comic papers, thought Verelst, who said: "Well, there is one comfort. It can't last forever."

With feigned sympathy Mrs. Austen took it up. "Ah, yes, but meanwhile there is that poor Belgium!"

"By the way," Paliser threw in. "I have a box or two for the Relief Fund at the Splendor to-night. Would anybody care to go?"

Kate Schermerhorn, who looked like a wayward angel, exclaimed at it: "Oh, do let's. There's to be a duck of a medium and I am just dying to have my fortune told."

Verelst showed his handsome false teeth. "No need of a medium for that, my dear. Your path is one of destruction. You will bowl men over as you go."

Kate laughed at him. "You seem very upright."

Mrs. Austen turned to Margaret. "If you care to go, we might get our wraps."

A moment later, when the women had left the room and the men were reseated, Verelst stretched a hand to Lennox. "Again I congratulate you and with all my heart."

Keith Lennox grasped that hand, shook it, smiled. The smile illuminated a face which, sombre in repose, then was radiant. Tall and straight, hard as nails, he had the romantic figure. In a costume other than evening clothes, he might have walked out of a tapestry.

With ambiguous amiability, Paliser smiled also. Already Margaret's beauty had stirred him. Already it had occurred to him that Lennox was very invitingly in the way.

III

THE ballrooms of the Splendor, peopled, as Mrs. Austen indulgently noted, with Goodness knows who from Heaven knows where, received her and her guests.

Not all of them, however. At the entrance, Verelst, pretexting a pretext, sagely dropped out. Within, a young man with ginger hair and laughing eyes, sprang from nowhere, pounced at Kate, floated her away.

Mrs. Austen, Margaret, Lennox and Paliser moved on.

In one room there was dancing; in another, a stage. It was in the first room that Kate was abducted. On the stage in the room beyond, a fat woman, dressed in green and gauze, was singing faded idiocies. Beyond, at the other end of the room was a booth above which was a sign—The Veiled Lady of Yucatan. Beneath the sign was a notice: All ye that enter here leave five dollars at the door.

The booth, hung with black velvet, was additionally supplied with hieroglyphs in burnished steel. What they meant was not for the profane, or even for the initiate. Champollion could not have deciphered them. Fronting the door stood a young woman with a dark skin, a solemn look and a costume which, at a pinch, might have been Maya.

In those accents which the Plaza shares with May-

fair, she hailed Margaret. "Hello, dear! Your turn next."

For a moment, the dark skin, the solemn look, the costume puzzled Margaret. Then at once she exclaimed: "Why, Poppet!" She paused and added: "This is Mr. Paliser—Miss Bleecker. You know Mr. Lennox."

But now, from the booth, a large woman with high colour, grey hair and a jewelled lorgnette rushed out and fastened herself on the sultry girl.

"Gimme back my money. Your veiled lady is a horror! Said I'd marry again!"

She raised her glasses. "Mary Austen, as I'm a sinner! Go in and have your misfortunes told. How do do Margaret? Marry again indeed! Oughtn't I to have my money back?"

"Poppet ought to make you pay twice," Mrs. Austen heartlessly retorted at this woman, the relict of Nicholas Amsterdam, concerning whom a story had come out and who had died, his friends said, of exposure.

Mrs. Amsterdam turned on Paliser whom she had never seen before. "What do you say?"

"I am appalled," he answered.

She turned again. "There, Poppet, you hear that? Gimme back my money."

But Miss Bleecker occupied herself with Lennox, who was paying for Margaret.

Margaret entered the booth where a little old woman, very plainly dressed, sat at a small deal table. From above hung a light. Beside her was a vacant chair.

"Sit there, please," the medium, in a low voice, told the girl. "And now, if you please, your hand."

Margaret, seating herself, removed a glove. The hand in which she then put hers was soft and warm and she feared that it might perspire. She looked at the woman who looked at her, sighed, closed her eyes and appeared to go to sleep. Then, presently, her lips parted and in a voice totally different from that in which she had just spoken, a voice that was thin and shrill, words came leapingly.

"You are engaged to be married. Your engagement will be broken. You will be very unhappy. Later, you will be thankful. Later you will realise that sorrow is sent to make us nobler than we were."

With an intake of the breath, the medium started, straightened, opened her eyes.

At the shock of it Margaret had started also. "But——"

The medium, in her former voice, low and gentle, interrupted.

"I can tell you nothing else. I do not know what was said. But I am sorry if you have had bad news."

Margaret stood up, replacing her glove. She knew, as we all know, that certain gifted organisms hear combinations of sound to which the rest of us are deaf. She knew, as many of us also know, that there are other organisms that can foresee events to which the rest of us are blind. But she knew too that in the same measure that the auditions of composers are not always notable, the visions of clairvoyants are not always exact. The knowledge steadied and partially comforted, but partially only.

At the entrance, Lennox stood with Miss Bleecker. A little beyond were Paliser and her mother. Mrs. Amsterdam, minus her money, must have rushed away.

Poppet Bleecker laughed and questioned: "No horrors?"

Lennox questioned also, but with his eyes.

Margaret hesitated. Then she got it. Taking the girl's hand she patted it and to Lennox said, and lightly enough: "Do go in. I want to see if what the medium says to you conforms with what she said to me."

Yet, however lightly she spoke, behind her girdle was that sensation which only the tormented know.

Beyond on the stage, the fat woman, now at the piano, was accompanying a girl who was singing a brindisi. The girl was young, good-looking, unembarrassed, very much at home. Her dress, a black chiffon, became her.

Then, in a moment, as Lennox entered the booth, Margaret joined her mother and looked at the girl.

"What is she singing?"

Paliser covered her with his eyes. "Verdi's *Segreto per esser felice*—the secret of happiness. Such a simple secret too."

"Yes?" Margaret absently returned. She was looking now at the booth. Quite as vaguely she added: "In what does it consist?"

"In getting what we do not deserve."

There was nothing in that to offend. But the man's eyes, of which already she had been conscious, did offend. They seemed to disrobe her. Annoyed she turned.

Paliser turned with her. "Verdi's bric-à-brac is very banal. Perhaps you prefer Strauss. His dissonances are more harmonic than they sound."

Now though there was applause. With a roulade the brindisi had ceased and the singer as though

pleased, not with herself but with the audience, bowed. The fat woman twisting on her bench, was also smiling. She looked cheerful and evil.

"I do believe that's the Tamburini," Mrs. Austen remarked. "I heard her at the Academy, ages ago." The usual touch followed. "How she has gone off!"

The fat woman stood up, and, preceded by the girl, descended into the audience.

Margaret looked again at the booth. Lennox was coming out. He said a word to Miss Bleecker and glanced about the room.

Margaret motioned. He did not notice. The girl who had been singing was bearing down on him, a hand outstretched and, in her face, an expression which Margaret could not interpret. But she saw Lennox smile, take her hand and say—what? Margaret could not tell, but it was something to which the girl was volubly replying.

"Who's his little friend?" Mrs. Austen in her even voice inquired. "Mr. Paliser," she added. "Would you mind telling—er—my daughter's young man that we are waiting?"

Margaret winced. She had turned from Paliser and she turned then from her mother.

Paliser, whom the phrase "my daughter's young man" amused, sauntered away. He strolled on to where Lennox stood with the girl. The fat woman joined them.

Lennox must have introduced Paliser, for Margaret could see them all talking at once. Then Lennox again looked about, saw Margaret and her mother, and came over.

"Who's your friend?" Mrs. Austen asked.

Lennox' eyes caressed Margaret. Then he turned

to her mother. "She is a Miss Cara. Cassy Cara her name is. I know her father. He is a violinist."

And my daughter is second fiddle, thought Mrs. Austen, who said: "How interesting!"

With his sombre air, Lennox summarised it. "She is studying for the opera. The woman with her, Madame Tamburini, is her coach. You may have heard of her."

"A fallen star," Mrs. Austen very pleasantly remarked. Quite as pleasantly she added: "The proper companion for a soiled dove."

The charm of that was lost. Margaret, who had not previously seen this girl but who had heard of her from Lennox, was speaking to him.

"It was her father, was it?" Then, dismissing it, she asked anxiously: "But do tell me, Keith, what did the medium say?"

"That I would be up for murder."

Margaret's eyes widened. But, judging it ridiculous, she exclaimed: "Was that all?"

"All!" Lennox grimly repeated. "What more would you have?" Abruptly he laughed. "I don't wonder Mrs. Amsterdam wanted her money back."

On the stage, from jungles of underwear, legs were tossing. The orchestra had become frankly canaille. Moreover the crowd of Goodness know's who had increased. A person had the temerity to elbow Mrs. Austen and the audacity to smile at her. It was the finishing touch.

She poked at Margaret. "Come."

As they moved on, a man smiled at Lennox, who, without stopping, gave him a hand.

He was an inkbeast. But there was nothing commercial in his appearance. Ordinarily, he looked like

a somnambulist. When he was talking, he resembled a comedian. In greeting Lennox he seemed to be in a pleasant dream. The crowd swallowed him.

"Who was that?" Mrs. Austen enquired.

"Ten Eyck Jones."

"The writer?" asked this lady, who liked novels, but who preferred to live them.

Meanwhile Paliser was talking to Cassy Cara and the Tamburini. The latter listened idly, with her evil smile. Yet Paliser's name was very evocative. The syllables had fallen richly on her ears.

Cassy Cara had not heard them and they would have conveyed nothing to her if she had. She was a slim girl, with a lot of auburn hair which was docked. The careless-minded thought her pretty. She was what is far rarer; she was handsome. Her features had the surety of an intaglio. Therewith was an air and a look that were not worldly or even superior, but which, when necessary as she sometimes found it, could reduce a man, and for that matter a woman, to proportions really imperceptible.

A little beauty and a little devil, thought Paliser, who was an expert. But leisurely, in his Oxford voice, he outlined for her a picture less defined. "You remind me of something."

With entire brevity and equal insolence, she returned it. "I dare say."

"Yes. Of supper."

"An ogre, are you?"

Paliser, ruminating the possibilities of her slim beauty served Régence, smiled at this girl who did not smile back. "Not Nebuchadnezzar at any rate. Vegetarianism is not my forte. Won't you and

Madame Tamburini take potluck with me? There must be a restaurant somewhere."

The fallen star moistened her painted lips. "Yes, why not?"

Born in California, of foreign parents, she had neither morals or accent and spoke in a deep voice. She spoke American and English. She spoke the easy French of the boulevards, the easier Italian of the operatic stage. She never spoke of Tamburini. She left him to be imagined, which perhaps he had been.

From the room they went on into a wide, crowded hall, beyond which was another room, enclosed in glass, where there were tables and palms.

As they entered, a captain approached. There was a smell of pineapple, the odour of fruit and flowers. From a gallery came the tinkle of mandolins. Mainly the tables were occupied. But the captain, waving the way, piloted them to a corner, got them seated and stood, pad in hand.

Paliser looked at Cassy Cara. She was hungry as a wolf, but she said indifferently: "A swallow of anything."

"One swallow does not make a supper," Paliser retorted and looked at the Tamburini who appeared less indifferent.

"Ham and eggs."

Without a quiver, the captain booked it.

"Also," Paliser told him, "caviare, woodcock, Ruinart." From the man he turned to the girl. "It was very decent of Lennox to introduce me to you."

Cassy put her elbows on the table. "He could not be anything else than decent. Don't you know him well?"

Paliser shrugged. "Our intimacy is not oppressive."

"He saved her father's life," the Tamburini put in. "Her father is a musician—and authentically marquis," she added, as though that explained everything.

"We are Portuguese," said Cassy, "or at least my father is. He used to play at the Metro. But he threw it up and one night, when he was coming home from a private house where he had been giving a concert, he was attacked. There were two of them. They knocked him down——"

"Before he had time to draw his sword-cane," the fat woman interrupted.

"Yes," Cassy resumed, "and just then Mr. Lennox came along and knocked them down and saved his violin which was what they were after."

"It's a Cremona," said the Tamburini who liked details.

"But that is not all of it," the girl continued. "My father's arm was broken. He has not been able to play since. Mr. Lennox brought him home and sent for his own physician. He's a dear."

"Who is?" Paliser asked. "The physician?"

But now a waiter was upon them with a bottle which he produced with a pop! Dishes followed to which Cassy permitted the man to help her. Her swallow of anything became large spoonfuls of rich blackness and the tenderness of savorous flesh. She was not carnal, but she was hungry and at her home latterly the food had been vile.

The Tamburini, with enigmatic ideas in the back of her head, ate her horrible dish very delicately, her little finger crooked. But she drank nobly.

Paliser too had ideas which, however, were not enigmatic in the least and not in the back of his head either. They concerned two young women, one of

whom was patently engaged to Lennox and the other probably in love with him. The situation appealed to this too charming young man to whom easy conquests were negligible.

He had been looking at Cassy. On the table was a vase in which there were flowers. He took two of them and looked again at the girl.

"Sunday is always hateful. Couldn't you both dine with me here?"

The former prima donna wiped her loose mouth. She could, she would, and she said so.

Paliser put the flowers before Cassy.

"Le parlate d'amor," the ex-diva began and, slightly for a moment, her deep voice mounted.

Cassy turned on her. "You're an imbecile."

With an uplift of the chin—a family habit—Paliser summoned the waiter. While he was paying him, Cassy protested. She had nothing to wear.

She had other objections which she kept to herself. If it had been Lennox she would have had none at all. But it was not Lennox. It was a man whom she had never seen before and who was entirely too free with his eyes.

"Come as you are," said the Tamburini, who massively stood up.

Paliser also was rising. "Let me put you in a cab and on Sunday——"

Cassy gave him a little unsugared look. "You take a great deal for granted."

Behind the girl's back the Tamburini gave him another look. Cheerful and evil and plainer than words it said: "Leave it to me."

Cassy, her perfect nose in the air, announced that she must get her things.

Through the emptying restaurant Paliser saw them to the entrance. There, as he waited, the captain hurried to him.

"Everything satisfactory, sir?"

"I want a private dining-room on Sunday."

"Yes, sir. For how many?"

"Two."

"Sorry, sir. It's against the rules."

Paliser surveyed him. "Whom does this hotel belong to? You?"

The captain smiled and caressed his chin. "No, sir, the hotel does not belong to me. It is owned by Mr. Paliser."

"Thank you. So I thought. I am Mr. Paliser. A private dining-room on Sunday for two."

But now Cassy and the Tamburini, hatted and cloaked, were returning. The chastened waiter moved aside. Through the still crowded halls, Paliser accompanied them to the street where, a doorkeeper assiduously assisting, he got them into a taxi, asked the addresses, paid the mechanician, saw them off.

Manfully, as the cab veered, the Tamburini swore.

"You damn fool, that man is rich as all outdoors."

IV

THE house in which Cassy lived was what is agreeably known as a walk-up. There was no lift, merely the stairs, flight after flight, which constituted the walk-up, one that ascended to the roof, where you had a fine view of your neighbours' laundry. Such things are not for everybody. Cassy hated them.

On this night when the taxi, after reaching Harlem, landed her there and, the walk-up achieved, she let herself into a flat on the fifth floor, a "You're late!" filtered out at her.

It was her father, who, other things being equal, you might have mistaken for Zuloaga's "Uncle." The lank hair, the sad eyes, the wan face, the dressing-gown, there he sat. Only the palette was absent. Instead was an arm in a sling. There was another difference. Beyond, in lieu of capricious manolas, was a piano and, above it, a portrait with which Zuloaga had nothing to do. The portrait represented a man who looked very fierce and who displayed a costume rich and unusual. Beneath the portrait was a violin. Beside the piano was a sword-cane. Otherwise, barring a rose-wood table, the room contained nothing to boast of.

"You're late," he repeated.

His name was Angelo Cara. When too young to remember it, he had come to New York from Lisbon. With him had come the swashbuckler in oil. He grew up in New York, developed artistic tastes, lost the oil

man, acquired a wife, lost her also, but not until she had given him a daughter who was named Bianca, a name which, after elongating into Casabianca, shortened itself into Cassy.

Meanwhile, on Madison Avenue, then unpolluted, there was a brown-stone front, a landau, other accessories, the flower of circumstances not opulent but easy, the rents and increments of the swashbuckler's estate, which by no means had come from Lisbon but which, the rich and unusual costume boxed in camphor, had been acquired in the import and sale of wine.

The fortune that the swashbuckler made descended to his son, who went to Wall Street with it. There the usual cropper wiped him out, affected his health, drove him, and not in a landau either, from Madison Avenue, left him the portrait, the violin, the table and nothing else.

But that is an exaggeration. To have debts is to have something. They stir you. They stirred him. Besides there was Cassy. To provide for both was the violin which in his hands played itself. For years it sufficed. Then, with extreme good sense, he fought with the Union, fought with Toscanini, disassociated himself from both. Now, latterly, with his arm in a sling, the wolf was not merely at the door, it was in the living-room of this Harlem flat which Cassy had just entered.

It was then that he repeated it. "You're late!"

For the past hour he had sat staring at things which the room did not contain—a great, glowing house; an orchestra demoniacally led by a conductor whom he strangely resembled; a stage on which, gracile in the violet and silver of doublet and hose, the last of the Caras bowed to the vivas.

Then abruptly the curtain had fallen, the lights had gone out, the vision faded, banished by the quick click of her key.

But not entirely. More or less the dream was always with him. When to-day is colourless, where can one live except in the future? To-day is packed with commonplaces which, could we see them correctly, are probably false for in the future only beautiful things are true. It is stupid not to live among them, particularly if you have the ability, and what artist lacks it? In the future, there is fame for the painter, there is posterity for the poet and much good may it do them. But for the musician, particularly for the song-bird, there is the vertigo of instant applause. In days like these, days that witness the fall of empires, the future holds for the donna, for the prima donna, for the prima donna assoluta, the grandest of earthly careers.

That career, Angelo Cara foresaw for his daughter, foresaw it at least in the hypnogogic visions which the artist always has within beck and call. In the falsifying commonplaces of broad daylight he was not so sure. Her upper register had in it a parterre of flowers, but elsewhere it lacked volume, lacked line, lacked colour, and occasionally he wondered whether her voice would not prove to be a *voix de salon* and not the royal organ that fills a house. Yet in the strawberry of her throat, the orifice was wide, the larynx properly abnormal. In addition the Tamburini was prophetically comforting.

But did the woman know her trade? He did not believe it. He believed though that she had no morals, never had had any, even as a child. It was the same way with Rachel and the fact left him cold. He

was artistically indifferent to what the putana did or omitted, to what anybody omitted or did. But anybody by no means included his daughter. At the thought of anything amiss with her, presto! his sad eyes flamed. Very needlessly too. Cassy was as indifferent to other people's conceptions of decorum as he was himself. The matter did not touch her. Clear-eyed, clean-minded, she was straight as a string.

"How did it go?" he asked.

Cassy laughed. She had had a glass of champagne. She had too, what is far headier, the wine of youth.

"Well, I didn't see any showmen tumbling over each other. Mr. Lennox was there. He asked after you, and introduced a man who had us out to supper. It was very good. I did so wish for you, poor dear."

"What man? What is his name?"

"Paliser, I think. Something of the kind. Ma Tamby told me."

"Not old M. P.?"

"Perhaps, I don't know. He has hair like a looking-glass. He did not seem old; he seemed very impudent. Ma Tamby says he's rich as all outdoors."

"That's the son then. Don't have anything to do with him. They're a bad lot."

"As if I cared! Ma Tamby said he could get me an engagement."

"Ha! In vaudeville with acrobats and funny men and little suppers to follow."

"Why not big ones?"

"Big what?"

"Big goose!" replied Cassy, who removed her gloves, took off her hat, ran a pin through it, put it down.

Her father stared. Behind the girl stood a blonde

brute whom the supper had evoked. He wore a scowl and a bloody apron. In his hand was a bill. Behind him was the baker, the candlestickmaker. Behind these was the agent, punctual and pertinacious, who had come for the rent. Though but visions, they were real. Moreover, though they evaporated at once, solidly they would return. He had been staring at her, and through her, at them. In staring his eyes filled. Immediately they leaked.

Cassy bit her lip. The tumbril and the guillotine would not have made her weep. Dry-eyed she would have gone from one to the other. Besides, what on earth was he wowing about? But immediately it occurred to her that he might be experiencing one of the attacks to which he was subject. She leaned over him. "You poor dear, is it your heart?"

He brushed his eyes. Dimly they lighted. With artistic mobility his face creased in a smile. "No, farther down."

Cassy moved back. "What in the world——"

But now his face clouded again. "I am glad you had supper. To-morrow we'll starve."

The exaggeration annoyed her, she exclaimed at it and then stopped short. Already she had envisaged the situation. But it was idle, she thought, to excite him additionally.

"Well?" he almost whinnied.

But as he would have to know, she out with it. "There's the portrait, there's the violin. Either would tide us over."

In speaking she had approached him again. He shoved her aside. With a jerk he got to his feet, struck an attitude, tapped himself on the breast.

"I, Marquis de Casa-Evora, sell my father's picture!

I, Angelo Cara, sell my violin! And you, my daughter, suggest such a thing! But are you my daughter? Are you—oh!”

It trailed away. The noble anger, real or assumed, fell from him. No longer the outraged father, he was but a human being in pain.

Cassy hurried to the mantel where, in provision of these attacks, were glass tubes with amyl in them. She took and broke one and had him inhale it.

Then, though presently the spasm passed, the wolf remained. But the beast had no terrors for Cassy. Buoyant, as youth ever is, his fangs amused her. They might close on her, but they would not hurt, at any rate very much, or, in any case, very long. Meanwhile she had had supper and for the morrow she had a plan. That night she dreamed of it. From the dream she passed into another. She dreamed she was going about giving money away. The dream of a dream, it was very beautiful, and sometimes, to exceptional beings, beautiful dreams come true, not in the future merely, but in a walk-up.

V

IN Park Avenue that night there was no dramatic father in waiting. There were no bills, no scenes, no thought of secret errands; merely a drawing-room in which a fire was burning and where, presently, Margaret and Lennox were alone.

"I have letters to write," Mrs. Austen told them.

She had no letters to write, but she did have a thing or two to consider. What the wolf was to Cassy's father, Lennox was to her.

At dinner, Peter Verelst's advice to do nothing had seemed strategic. At the Splendor, it had seemed stupid. The spectacle of that girl hobnobbing with Lennox had interested her enormously. If a spectacle can drip, that had dripped and with possibilities which, if dim as yet, were none the less providential, particularly when viewed spaciouly, in the light of other possibilities which Paliser exhaled. Mrs. Austen was a woman of distinction. You had only to look at her to be aware of it. Yet, at the possible possibilities, she licked her chops.

Meanwhile, with the seriousness of those to whom love is not the sentiment that it once was, or the sensation that it has become, but the dense incarnate mystery that it ever should be, Margaret and Lennox were also occupied with the future.

In connection with it, Lennox asked: "Can you come to-morrow?"

As he spoke, Margaret released her hand. Her mother was entering and he stood up.

"Mrs. Austen," he resumed, "won't you and Margaret have tea at my apartment to-morrow?"

He would have reseated himself but the lady saw to it that he did not.

"You have such pleasant programmes, Mr. Lennox. You are not going though, are you? Well, if you must, good-night."

It was boreal, yet, however arctic, it was smiling, debonair. As such, Lennox had no recourse but to accept it. He bent over Margaret's hand, touched two of Mrs. Austen's fingers. In a moment, he had gone.

Mrs. Austen, smiling still, sat down.

"Nice young man. Very nice. Nice hats, nice ties, nice coats. Then also he is a theosophist, I suppose, or, if not, then by way of becoming one. What more could the heart desire? Would you mind putting out one of those lights? Not that one—the other."

Gowned in grey which in spite of its hue contrived to be brilliant, Mrs. Austen rustled ever so slightly. Always a handsome woman and well aware of it, she was of two minds about her daughter's looks. They far surpassed her own and she did not like that. On the other hand they were an asset on which she counted.

She rustled, quite as slightly again.

"And such a taking way with him! That little singing-girl whom we saw to-night, quite a pretty child, didn't you think? She seemed quite smitten. Then there are others, one may suppose. Yes, certainly, a very nice young man."

"Mother!"

"Well, what? Young men will be young men."

Only a theosophist could imagine that they would be young girls. I make every allowance from him—as doubtless he does for others. This is quite as it should be. I have no patience with model young men. Model young men delight their mothers' hearts and ruin their wives' temper. They remodel themselves after marriage. Whereas a young man who is not model at all, one who has had his fling beforehand, settles down and becomes quite fat. You have chosen very wisely, my dear. If you had waited you might have had Paliser and I should not have liked that. He is too good."

Margaret stretched a hand to the fire. She was not cold and the movement was mechanical. But she made no reply. In Matthew we are told that for every idle word we utter we shall answer at the day of judgment. That passage she had longly meditated. She did not believe that Matthew wrote it and she did not believe in a day of judgment. Matthew was a peasant who spoke Syro-Chaldaic. It was not supposable that he could write in Greek. It was not supposable that there can be a specific day of judgment, since every moment of our days is judged. But through Margaret had her tolerant doubts, she knew that the message itself was sound. It did not condemn evil and vulgar words, for they condemn themselves. What it condemned was idle words and she regretted that her mother employed them. But theosophy is, primarily, a school of good manners. The Gospel condemns idle words, theosophy forbids disagreeable ones.

To her mother's remarks, she made therefore no reply. Instead, she changed the subject.

"Will you care to go with me to his rooms to-morrow?"

With a mimic of surprise and of gentle remonstrance that was admirably assumed, Mrs. Austen lifted a hand.

"But, my dear! Were you thinking of going alone?"

The remonstrance, however gentle, was absurd and she knew it. Margaret could go where she liked. It would all be chaste as a piano-recital. But the flea that she had been trying to put in the girl's ear seemed very ineffective. She is just as I was at her age, thought this lady, who, in so thinking, flattered herself extraordinarily.

She shook her head. "For if you were, it would not do. Such things may pass in London, they don't here. But to-morrow is Saturday, isn't it? Yes, to-morrow is Saturday. At three I have an appointment with the dentist. I'll telephone though. That always pains them and, where a dentist is concerned, I do think turn about is fair play."

It was pleasantly said. To make it pleasanter, she stood up and added: "Are you to sit here and read? There is a French book lying around somewhere that belonged to your dear father. I don't remember who wrote it and I have forgotten the title, but you are sure to like it. There! I have it. It is called: '*L'art de tromper les femmes.*'"

Mrs. Austen moved to the door and looked back.

"But if you don't find it readily, let it go for to-night. Your young man is sure to have a copy. No nice young man is without one."

VI

LENNOX was a broker, a vocation which he practised in Wall Street. Early on the following afternoon, while returning from there, he sat wedged between a gunman and a Hun. He was unconscious of either. The uncertain market; the slump, momentarily undiscernible, but mathematically inevitable; customers, credulous or sceptical, but always avid; the pulse of the feverish street which the ticker indifferently registered; the atmosphere of tobacco and greed; the trailing announcements; "Steel, three-fourths; Pennsy, a half," these things were forgotten. The train crashed on. Of that too he was unconscious.

Before him a panorama had unrolled—the day he first saw her, the hour he first loved her, the moment he first thought she might care for him—the usual panorama that unfolds before any one fortunate enough to love and to be loved in return.

"Grand Central!"

The gunman disappeared, the Hun had gone, the car emptied itself on a platform from which it was at once refilled. Lennox ascended the stair, reached the street, boarded a taxi, drove to his home.

The latter, situated on the ground floor of an apartment house a step from Park Avenue, was entirely commonplace, fitted with furniture large and ugly,

yet minutely relieved by a photograph which showed the almost perfect oval of Margaret's almost perfect face.

The photograph stood on a table in the sitting-room beyond which extended other rooms that, in addition to being ugly, were dark. But Lennox had no degrading manias for comfort. Pending the great day he camped in these rooms, above which, on an upper storey was a duplex apartment which, if Margaret liked, he proposed to take.

It was for her opinion regarding it that he had asked her to come. In the forenoon she had telephoned that she and her mother would both be with him. He had instructed his servant accordingly and now a silver tea-service that had belonged to his grandmother and which, being Victorian, was hideous, gleamed at him as he entered the rooms.

Something else gleamed also. On a rug, a puddle of sunlight had spilled.

Above, on the embossed platter, were petits fours, watercress sandwiches, a sack of sweetmeats, a bunch of violets, a scatter of cups. Beneath was the puddle.

Lennox looked. It seemed all right.

Harris, his servant, a little man, thin as an umbrella, sidled silently by. The vestibule took him. From it came the sound of a voice, limpid, clear, which Lennox knew and knew too was not Margaret's.

"A lady to see you, sir," Harris, reappearing and effacing himself, announced.

The doorway framed her. There, with her shock of auburn hair, her cameo face, her slim figure and her costume which, though simple, was not the ruinous simplicity that Fifth Avenue achieves, Cassy presented a picture very different from that on the table,

a picture otherwise differentiated by a bundle that was big as a baby.

Lennox did not know but that it might contain a baby and the possibility alarmed this man who was afraid of nobody.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

In exclaiming, he stared. He liked the girl. But at the moment she was in the way. Moreover, why she had come to these rooms of his, where she had not been invited, and where she had not ventured before, was a mystery.

"How's your father?" he added.

There are people, as there are animals, that cannot be awkward and are never ridiculous. Cassy was one of them. None the less she stood on one foot. The tea-table had become very talkative. It told her that it was expecting somebody; that watercress sandwiches were not for her; no, nor Victorian horrors either.

"Be off!" it shouted.

"Sit down," said Lennox.

Cassy, hugging the bundle, remained in the doorway. It was not the tea-table merely, but something else, the indefinable something which one may feel and not describe that was telling her to hurry. Afterward, with that regret which multiplies tears and subtracts nothing, she wished she had hurried, wished rather that she had not come, wished that she had defied the wolf, outfaced the butcher, done anything except enter these rooms.

She shifted the bundle. "I have been gadding about in Wall Street. I never was there before, but it is so nice and windy I may go there again. This is just a good-day and good-bye."

As she spoke she turned, and as she turned Lennox' heart smote him. He hurried to her.

"See here! You can't go like this. Have a cup of tea."

Cassy gave him the rare seduction of her smile. "Thank you. I am out on business and I never drink in business hours."

But now Lennox had got himself between her and the vestibule.

"Business!" he repeated. "What is it? Anything in my line? Let's transact it here. Wall Street is no place"—for a pretty girl he was about to say but, desisting, he substituted—"for you."

"But you are expecting people."

"How in the world did you know? Anyway, they are not here yet and if they were they would be glad to meet you."

"I wonder!" said Cassy, whose wonder concerned not their pleasure but her own, and concerned it because she hated snobs, among whom she knew that Lennox moved.

"Now, tell me," he resumed.

Cassy, realising that it must be then or never, looked up at him.

"You remember father's violin?"

"I should say I did."

"Well, my business in Wall Street was to offer it as—what do you call it?—as collateral."

Lennox indicated the bundle. "Is that it?"

Cassy nodded. "I had to hide it and smuggle it out without his knowing it. He thinks it stolen. If he knew, he would kill me. As it is, he has gone crazy. To quiet him, I said I would go to the police."

Lennox laughed. "And I am the police!"

"Yes, you're the police."

"All right then. The police have recovered it. Take it back to him. How much do you need? Will a hundred do?"

That was not Cassy's idea. She shook her docked head at it. "You're the police but I am a business man. If you make the loan, you must keep the collateral."

"You are a little Jew, that's what you are," Lennox, affecting annoyance, replied.

Cassy smiled, "I like your *jeu d'esprit*. But not well enough to accept money as a gift."

"Good Lord!" Lennox protested. "Look here! I am not giving money away. I don't mean it as a gift. Pay me back whenever you like. Until then, what do you expect me to do with that thing? Give serenades? No, take it back to your father. I know just how he feels about it. He told me."

Cassy shifted the bundle. "Good-bye then." But as he still blocked the way, she added: "Will you let me pass?"

Moralists maintain that a man should never argue with a woman, particularly when she is young and good-looking. He should yield, they assert. Cassy's youth and beauty said nothing audible to Lennox. They said nothing of which he was then aware. In addition he was not a moralist. But there are influences, as there are bacilli, which unconsciously we absorb. For some time he had been absorbing a few. He did not realise it then. When he did, he was in prison. That though was later. At the moment he threw up his hands.

"I surrender. Will you mind putting it down somewhere?"

Cassy turned. Beyond was a table and near it a chair to which she went. There she dumped the violin. In so doing she saw Margaret's picture.

"What a lovely girl!"

Lennox, who had followed, nodded. "That is Miss Austen to whom I am engaged."

"Oh!" said Cassy. She did not know that Lennox was engaged. But suddenly the room had become uncomfortably warm and she blurted it: "How happy she must be!"

At the slip, for he thought it one, Lennox laughed.

"You mean how happy I must be," exclaimed this rare individual to whom the verb to be happy had a present tense, yet one which even then it was losing.

He had been fumbling in a pocket. From it he drew a wad of bills, fives and tens, and made another wad. "Here you are. I will mail you a receipt for the collateral."

Cassy, taking the money in one hand, extended the other. "May I say something?"

"Why, of course."

Cassy could talk and very fluently. But at the moment she choked. What is worse, she flushed. Conscious of which and annoyed at it, she withdrew her hand and said: "It's so hot here!"

Lennox looked about, then at her. "Is it? Was that what you wanted to say?"

Cassy shook herself. "No, and it was very rude of me. I wanted to thank you. Good-bye, Mr. Policeman."

"Good-bye," he threw after the girl, who, in leaving the room, must have taken the sunlight with her. As she passed over the rug, the puddle passed too. It followed her out like a dog.

That phenomenon, to which Lennox then attached no significance, he afterward recalled. For the moment he busied himself with pen and ink. Presently he touched a button.

From regions beyond the little old man appeared.

Lennox motioned at the bundle. "Take that to this address. Ask for Mr. Cara and say it comes from the police. From the police, don't forget, Harris."

"I'll not forget, sir."

"And go now. When the ladies come, I'll open the door."

As it happened, only shadows came. The shadows lengthened. They lapped the floor, devoured the silver, turned the rug into a pit, the room into darkness. Apart from shadows, no one came, no one rang. But, though Lennox was unaware of it, two people did come, and of the two one would have rung, had not the other prevented.

Lennox did not know that. On the inaccessible planes where events are marshalled, it was perhaps prearranged that he should not.

VII

MARGARET, on her way to Lennox that afternoon, wondered whether it might not be possible for them to live elsewhere.

Born and bred in the sordid hell with a blue sky that New York was before the war, latterly the sky itself had darkened. The world in which she moved, distressed her. Its parure of gaiety shocked. Those who peopled it were not sordid, they were not even blue. Europe agonised and they dined and danced, displayed themselves at the opera, summarised the war as dreadful, dismissed it, gossiped and laughed. It was that attitude which distressed this girl who, had she been capable of wishing ill to any one, might have wished them treated as were the *élegant*es of Brussels.

Margaret had no such evil wish. But she did hope that when married, she might reside elsewhere.

"There goes that Mrs. Tomlinson," said her mother. "Last night at the Bazaar—what do you suppose? She asked me to dinner. She actually did! The woman must be mad."

Margaret made no reply. Park Avenue was very bright. To her also for the moment the scientific savagery of the Huns was remote. The brightness of the April day was about her.

"I am in rags," continued Mrs. Austen, who was

admirably dressed. "On Monday I must really look in on Marguerite. She is an utter liar, but then you feel so safe with her. Where is it that your young man lives? Somebody said that lies whiten the teeth. It must be there, isn't it? Or is it here? These places all look alike, none of them seems to have any numbers and that makes it so convenient."

They had reached a chalk cliff, on the face of which were windows, balconies and, at the base, two low steps. On the upper step, in large black letters, was the cliff's name.

Through glasses, which she did not need, Mrs. Austen surveyed it. "The Sandringham! Why not The Throne?"

Margaret went on and up. Mrs. Austen followed. At once they were in a large, marble-flagged hall. Beyond, from a lift, a boy in green and gilt, peered greedily. At the left was a door with a brass plate that said: "Dr. Winship." Opposite was another door with another plate on which was "Lennox."

That, also, Mrs. Austen surveyed. "I did not know your young man was an earl, but perhaps he is merely a duke. Shall we send that boy or do we ring? In bachelor quarters one hardly knows what to do—or what goes on in them either," she immediately and suggestively added.

The door at the right had opened. Cassy was coming out. The flush was still on her face and in her hand was the money. Mechanically she thumbed it. She had looked down at the roll of bills and through them at the butcher, the baker, the candlestickmaker. She looked up and saw Margaret whose photograph she had seen a moment before. Instantly she recognised her. Instantly she realised that it was for her

the violets and the sack of bonbons were waiting. As quickly she understood why the teapot had shouted: "Be off!"

From Margaret she glanced at Mrs. Austen, who was well worth it. In and about her eyes and mouth there was an expression of such lofty aloofness, an air of such aristocratic disdain, that though she stood without motion, movement, or gesture; though, too, there was no draught, the skirt of her admirable frock seemed to lift and avert itself. It was the triumph of civilised life. Yet that triumph she contrived to heighten. Raising the glasses which she did not need, she levelled them at Cassy.

Cassy, who had but glanced at her, arrested the glance and, for a second, held it on her, but with an unconcern so obliterating that it had the effect of blotting-paper. Mrs. Austen felt herself disappearing. It was as though Cassy had looked at her and had seen nothing whatever.

And that to Mrs. Austen! The lady squirmed but she rallied, the more readily perhaps since now Cassy had gone, and she said and pleasantly enough: "What a charming vestal! Such an engaging manner! Seemed, too, so at home! Let me see? It was she, was it not, who was singing last night? Rather a coincidence, don't you think?"

Margaret made no reply. The incident, though long in the telling, had barely outlasted a moment, and crossing the hall, she was approaching Lennox' door.

Without haste, Mrs. Austen circumvented her. "Not to-day, my dear. As it is, it is fortunate we came on foot. Otherwise, it would have been awkward and that is always so distressing. Another day."

Quietly, easily she had got herself in front of Mar-

garet who, without shoving, could not reach the bell.

With candid eyes she looked at her mother. "You seem to be suggesting——"

"Perish the thought!" Mrs. Austen sweetly and quickly cut in. "I would not even suggest that one and two make three, for perhaps they don't. No, my dear, I suggest nothing. I merely insist. To-day we must postpone our little visit and to-night, when he comes, you can have it out with him. A lover's quarrel! What more could you wish? But here now is the lift-boy. We must dissemble. It's quite like a play.

"No," she interrupted herself to remark at the approaching, greedy and enquiring youth, "I want nothing whatever except not to be engaged in conversation."

"Whachyer mean?" asked the boy, who, however, promptly blighted by her level stare, omitted to pursue it.

She turned again to Margaret. "We will find a taxi at the corner. These first spring days are so enervating."

Margaret faced her. "I am going in."

The sight of Cassy issuing from Lennox' rooms had surprised her, as the unexpected will surprise. But in saying that she was going in, it was not at all for explanations. Explanations are for strangers. Love understands—or should understand, and Margaret divined that Cassy had come on some errand from her father, of whose waylaying and rescue Lennox had long since told her.

"Will you please move a little?" she added.

Mrs. Austen, after routing the boy, had lowered her glasses. She raised them again. "Look there!"

At the entrance were two women with a child between them. On the stair was a man. The door marked "Dr. Winship" had opened. The wide hall was suddenly full of people.

Mrs. Austen lowered her lorgnette. "Don't make a scene, my dear. At least, don't make one over my dead body."

Resistance was easy, but to what end? Margaret felt that she could persist, insist, ring and go in, but now only to be accompanied by her mother's mocking and stilted sneers. The consciousness of that subtracted the brightness from the day, the pleasure from the visit. Then, too, that evening he would come. Then they would be alone.

She turned. A moment more and both were in the street, where Mrs. Austen forgot about the taxi. Other matters occupied the good woman and occupied her very agreeably. She had been playing a game, and a rare game it is, with destiny. The stakes were extravagant, but her cards were poor. Then abruptly, in one of the prodigious shuffles that fate contrives, a hand, issuing from nowhere, had dealt her a flush. She purred at it, at the avenue, at the world, at her daughter.

"I am so glad we are not going anywhere to-night." A car flew by, a gloved hand waved and the purr continued. "Wasn't that Sarah Amsterdam? By the way, what did the medium tell you? Anything about a dark man crossing your path? If not, it was very careless of her. But what was I talking about? Oh, yes, I am so glad we are to be at home. You can have a nice, quiet evening with your young man. Only, do you know, I wouldn't say anything about that little vestal. He might not like it. Men are so queer. They

hate to be misunderstood and to be understood makes them furious. No, I wouldn't mention it. But now isn't he as full of surprises as a grab-bag? I thought him a model of the most perfect propriety, and that only shows how wrong it is to judge by appearances. Model young men always remind me of floor-walkers. Who was that that just bowed? Dear me, so it was, and he looked so down in the mouth he might have been a dentist. On Monday I really must go to my dentist. He does hurt terribly and that is so reassuring. You feel that you are getting your money's worth. Don't your teeth need attending to? Ah, here we are at last! God bless our home!"

Entering the hall, she looked at a little room to the right in which the manager awed prospecting tenants. Usually it was empty. It was empty then. Mrs. Austen looked, passed on and, preceding Margaret, entered a lift that floated them to the home on which she had asked a blessing.

VIII

THE Italians have a proverb about waiting for some one who does not come. They call it deadly. Among the lapping shadows Lennox felt the force of it. But concluding that visitors had detained his guests, he dressed and went around a corner or two to the Athenæum Club where usually he dined.

In the main room which gives on Fifth Avenue, he found Ten Eyck Jones talking war. Jones was a novelist, but he did not look like one. There was nothing commercial in his appearance, which was that of a man half-asleep, except when he talked and then he seemed very much awake. He was not fat and though an inkbeast, he dressed after the manner of those who put themselves in the best hands and then forget all about it. But for Lennox he had a superior quality, he was a friend. With him was Harry Cantillon, who, the night before, had danced away with Kate Schermerhorn. Straddling an arm of Cantillon's chair was Fred Ogston, a young man of a type that, even before the war, was vanishing and which was known as about town. Adjacent sat Peter Verelst. Servants brought little decanters and removed others. In a corner an old man glared with envious venom at the liquors of which he had consumed too many and of which, at the price of his eyesight, he could consume no more.

Jones waved at Lennox. "I have been telling these

chaps that before they are much older they will be in khaki."

"Houp!" cried Cantillon. He sprang up, ran to the arched entrance, where, lightly, without effort, he turned a somersault and was gone.

The old man in the corner raised himself, shuffled to a table, sat down and wrote to the house committee. Such conduct could not be tolerated! Having said it, he raised himself again and shuffled over with the letter to Dunwoodie, a lawyer with the battered face of a bulldog and a ruffian's rumpled clothes.

Dunwoodie, instead of taking the letter, gave the old man a look, one look, his famous look, the look with which—it was said—he reversed the Bench. Angriily the old man turned tail, collided with Paliser, apologised furiously, damning him beneath his breath, damning Dunwoodie, damning the house committee, damning the club.

"Are you to dine here?" Jones asked Ogston, who swore gently, declaring that, worse luck, he was due at his aunt's.

"But you are," Jones told Lennox. "Come on and I'll make your hair stand on end." He turned: "And yours, too."

Peter Verelst smoothed the back of his head. "Thank you, Ten Eyck. But such hair as I have I prefer should remain as it is."

The two men went on and up into another room, spacious, high-ceiled, set with tables, where a captain got them seated, took their orders, carefully transmitted them to a careful waiter, an omnibus meanwhile producing ice-water which Jones had promptly removed.

He smiled at Lennox. "Who was the jeunesse you

and Paliser were talking to last night? She had been singing."

Lennox unfolded a napkin. "I thought you were to make my hair stand on end."

"Well," said the novelist, who spoke better than he knew, "she may make Paliser's. There's a young man with plenty of perspective. I saw him in London just before the deluge. He was then en route for the Marquesas. I envied him that. I envied him the vanilla-scented nights; the skies, a solid crust of stars, and also, and particularly, the tattooed ghosts. But I am forgetting your hair. Were you ever in Berlin?"

Lennox scowled. "Yes. Once."

"And once is too often. The last time I was there, I looked down the Wilhelmstrasse and it got up and threatened me. Barring the possibilities of future avatars, I shall not promenade there again. But I would give a red pippin, I would give two of them, to have been in Potsdam on that night, that cloudless night, the night in July, when in a room, gorgeous as only vulgarity could make it, there was sounded the crack of doom."

Jones gestured and a waiter hurried to him. He motioned him away.

"You can picture it, Lennox, or, if not, who am I to refuse my aid? At the doors were lackeys; at the gates were guards. Without and beyond, to the four points of the compass, an unsuspecting world slept, toiled, feasted, fasted, occupied with its soap-bubble hates and loves. But, in that room, saurians, with titles as long as your arm, were contriving a cataclysm that was to exceed the deluge. Since then, and though it be but through the headlines, you and I stand witness to events that no mortal ever saw before. That night,

in that room they were concocted. By comparison, what are the mythical exploits of Homer's warriors, the fabulous achievements of Charlemagne's paladins, the fading memories of Napoleon's campaigns? What are they all by comparison to a world in flames? Hugo, with his usual sobriety, said that Napoleon inconvenienced God. Napoleon wanted Europe. These gunmen want the earth. They won't get it. Hell is their portion. But, while they were planning the crib-cracking, I would give a red pippin to have been in their joint that night. A little more trout?"

Jones turned to the waiter. "Take it away and fetch the roast."

He was about to give other orders, yet these Lennox interrupted.

"But look here. You spoke of an unsuspecting world. The Kaiser had been rattling the sabre for years. Everybody knew that."

"So he had," said Jones, who contradicted no one. "But England did not take him seriously, nor did this country either. Consequently, when the war began it was regarded as but another robber-raid which shortly would be over. That was an idea that everybody shared, even to the Kaiser, who afterward said that he had not wanted this war. Incredible as it may seem he spoke the truth. He did not want a war in which he would be tripped on the Marne, blocked on the Yser and foiled at Verdun. He wanted a war in which France would be felled, Russia rolled back, a war in which, over Serbia's ravaged corpse, his legions could pour down across the Turkish carpet into the realm where Sardanapalus throned, beyond to that of Haroun-al-Raschid, on from thence to Ormus and the Ind, and, with the resulting thralls

and treasure, overwhelm England, gut the United States, destroy civilisation and, on the ruins, set Deutschland über Alles!"

"Hear! Hear!" said Lennox from between bites.

Jones, after a momentary interlude with a fork, got back at it. "That is what he wanted! But to get it, he lacked one thing, one thing only. He had everything else, he had everything that forethought, ingenuity and science could provide. The arsenals were stocked. The granaries were packed, the war-chests replete. Grey-green uniforms were piled endlessly in heaps. Kiel—previously stolen from Denmark, but then reconstructed and raised to the war degree—at last was open. The navy was ready. The army was ready. Against any possible combination of European forces, the oiled machine was prepared. In addition, clairvoyance had supplied the pretext and stupidity the chance. Petersburg was then in the throes of a general strike—which the Wilhelmstrasse had engineered. In Paris, the slipshod condition of the army had been publicly denounced. England and Ireland were nearly at each other's throats. Yet, had they been in each other's arms, the Kaiser was convinced that England would not interfere. Moreover in France, mobilisation required weeks; in Russia, months; and even then the Russian army, otherwise unequipped, the Tsarina had supplied with two hundred Teuton generals. That woman used to exclaim at her resemblance to Marie Antoinette. She flattered herself. It is Bazaine whom she resembled. But where was I? Oh, yes. The opportunity was so obvious and everything so neatly prepared that, for good measure, the pretext was added. An archduke, sinister when living and still more sinister dead, was, by the Kaiser's orders, bombed

to bits and the bombing fastened on Serbia. Allied stupidity provided the opportunity, imperial forethought supplied the rest. Since highwayry began, never was there such a chance. On the last gaiter was the last button. The Kaiser lacked but one thing."

Lennox shoved at his plate. "So you have said."

Jones, abandoning his fork, repeated it. "One thing! In Potsdam, on that cloudless July night, when the world, on which he proposed to batten, slept, toiled, feasted, fasted, occupied with its futile loves and hates, that thing must have occurred to him."

"Yes, but confound it, what was it?"

Jones lit a cigar. "Bernstorff said, or is said to have said—I do not count him among my acquaintances—that on that night this supercanaille showed symptoms of what I think I have seen described as vacillation. That is quite on the cards. It bears out my theory. In any event the fellow had his ambitions. He wanted to descend into the red halls of history disguised. He might have succeeded. History is very careless and to-day barely recalls that at five o'clock on the morning succeeding his marriage to a dowdy fat girl, he treated his regiment to a drill. The fact is uninteresting and would be equally unimportant were it not for the note that it struck. Subsequently, when he leaped on the throne, he shouted that those who opposed him he would smash. "There is no other law than mine"; he later announced—a fine phrase and yet but a modern variant of Domitian's: "Your god and master orders it." Incidentally, in addition to the Garter, an honorific which the Duke of Cambridge admirably summarised as "having, sir, none of the damned nonsense of merit about it," he had other distinctions. He had—and has—uranomania, that is

to say, a flight of fancy in which the patient believes himself associated with God. He had also defilurium tremens, which manifested itself in those manœuvres that are war's image and in which the troops defile. Yet, when it came to the real thing, it may be that this paradomaniac lacked the stomach. Apart from the Kruger incident, and one or two other indecencies, his observance of international etiquette was relatively correct. The lackeys of history might therefore have deodorised him. With a sow's ear a lot may be done. Have a cigar?"

Lennox laughed. "I would prefer the point."

"Now, how greedy you are. Well then, here it is. On that fatidic night in July, this fellow was fifty-five."

"What of it?"

"Everything. At his age Alexander had been dead twenty years."

As Jones spoke he raised his hands. "Spirit of the Great Sinner, forgive me! This scrofulous dwarf has no kinship with thee!"

"No," Jones, dropping his hands, resumed. "None. His kin are Herod, Caracalla, Attila, Genghis Khan, and Cloacus, Lord of Sewers. Those are his kin. To the shade of the Lampsacene, whom the world had forgotten; to that of Cloacus, whom civilisation had ignored, subsequently he devoted the army. For the troops he invoked them. But that night the ghosts of the others gave him pause. At his age, Caracalla, Attila, Genghis, were dead. They had died hideous, monstrous—but young. Herod alone may have seemed a promising saint to swear by, though, in the obscurities of Syrian chronology, even of him he could not be sure. The one kindred hyena who, at fifty-five,

had defied the world was Tsi An, the Chinese Empress, and he had helped to squelch her. Do you see it now? To burglarise the world, this thug had every advantage. The police were asleep. The coast was clear. The jimmies and the dynamite sticks were ready. Even the dark lantern was packed. The kit was complete. He had everything. He lacked nothing, except the one essential—Youth! The eyes of youth are clear. His were too dimmed to foresee that the allies——”

Lennox was rising.

Amiably Jones switched on and off again. “Hold on a minute. You have not given me the “Who’s Who of that young woman.”

In Lennox’ brain, instantly cells latent, alert, and of which he was entirely unconscious, functioned actively. Before him Cassy stood. Beside her was another. This other, very lovely, was a saint. Yet, prompted still by the cells and equally unaware of it, it occurred to him that a lovely saint may resemble a vase that is exquisite, but unresilient and perhaps even empty. Whereas a siren, like Cassy——

Abruptly he caught himself up. The unawaited disloyalty into which he had floundered, surprised and annoyed him. He could not account for the delicate infidelity and perplexedly he looked at Jones who still was at it.

“The diva I mean. The diva in duodecimo who sang at the Bazaar.”

Lennox shook himself and sat down again. Modestly then the thrice-told tale was repeated—Angelo Cara, a violin in one hand, a sword-cane in the other, trudging home. The attack, the rout, the rescue, the acquaintance with Cassy that ensued.

Jones, absorbing the story, pigeonholed his memory

with the details which, sometime, for copy purposes, might be of use.

"They are Portuguese," Lennox, rising again, concluded.

Jones peered about. The great room was filled with members, eating, drinking, laughing, talking—talking mainly of nothing whatever. He motioned. "Isn't that Cantillon over there with—of all people!—Dunwoodie?"

Lennox looked and nodded. "Cantillon is in Dunwoodie's office. He asked me to give him my law business." Indifferently, with the air of one considering the improbable, Lennox added: "Some day I may. Good-night."

But in the night into which he then went, already that day was breaking.

IX

THAT same evening, as Lennox was leaving the club, Mrs. Austen, rising from the dinner-table, preceded Margaret into the drawing-room and looked at the clock, a prostrate nymph, balancing a dial on the soles of her feet. At the figures on the dial, the nymph pointed a finger.

From the clock Mrs. Austen turned and exclaimed at the windows which she had already examined. "The jardinières have not yet been attended to! It is inconceivable!"

Margaret, who had seated herself, said: "You might send for the manager."

"He would only keep me waiting and then expect me to tell him what I wanted. He ought to know. Besides, I might have forgotten. It is very tiresome."

Margaret stood up. "I will tell him."

With a click, Mrs. Austen unfurled a fan and, with another click, refurled it. "No. I will see him myself. I am quite in the humour."

Margaret looked after her mother, who was leaving the room. The sudden tempest in a flowerpot surprised her. But the outer door closed. Margaret re-seated herself. Presently he would come and together they would make those plans that lovers make—and then unmake, unless, elsewhere, they have been made for them.

Meanwhile she waited. The incident at the Sand-

ringham, the sight of Cassy, her mother's facile insinuations, these things had distressed her, because, and only because, they had prevented her from enjoying the innocent pleasure of the innocent visit to the rooms of her betrothed, whom she loved with a love that was too pure and too profound, to harbour doubt and suspicion and that evil child of theirs which jealousy is. Her faith was perfect. That faith showed in her face and heightened her beauty with a candour that should have disarmed her mother, who, in the hall below, was, at that moment, instructing a man and not about flower-boxes either.

"Mr. Lennox, you may know him, by sight I mean, will be coming here shortly. Please have him shown into that room there."

Mrs. Austen passed on. The little room at which she had glanced that afternoon received her—a hospitality in which a mirror joined. The latter welcomed her with a glimpse of herself. It was like meeting an old friend. But no; a friend certainly, yet not an old one. Age had not touched this lady, not impudently at least, though where it may have had the impertinence to lay a finger, art had applied another, a moving finger that had written a parody of youth on her face which was then turning to some one behind her whom the mirror disclosed.

In turning, she smiled.

"It is so good of you, Mr. Lennox, to look in on me. The door-man told you about Margaret, did he not? No? How careless of him. The dear child has a headache and has gone to bed."

"Has she?" said Lennox. He found but that. But at least he understood why Margaret had not come to his rooms. The headache had prevented her.

"It is nothing." Mrs. Austen was telling him. "Tomorrow she will be herself again. Nice weather we are having."

"Very," Lennox answered.

As he would have said the same thing if Mrs. Austen had declared that the weather was beastly, the reply did not matter. It did not matter to her; it did not matter to him. She was thinking of something else and he was also. He was thinking of Margaret, wondering whether he might not go to her. Were it not for the strait-jacket that conventionality is and which pinions the sturdiest, he would have gone. He was a little afraid of Mrs. Austen, as an intelligent man sometimes is afraid of an imbecile woman. But his fear of her faded beside the idea that if, disregarding the bagatelles of the door, he made his way to Margaret, she herself might not like it. That alone restrained him. Afterward he wished he had let nothing prevent him. Afterward he regretted it. It is the misery of life—and sometimes its reward—that regret should be futile.

But, at the moment, grim and virile, a hat in one hand, a stick in the other, his white tie just showing between the lapels of his overcoat, already he was consoling himself. He had not seen Margaret in the afternoon, and he was not to see her this evening. No matter. The morrow would repay—that morrow which is falser than the former day.

Pleasantly at him and at his thoughts, Mrs. Austen played the flute. "Won't you sit down?" In speaking, she sank on a sofa which she occupied amply.

Lennox, shifting his stick, took a chair. Later, in one of those evil moods that come to the best, as well as to the worst, he wished he had brained her with it.

With the magic flute, Mrs. Austen continued: "Tomorrow is Sunday, is it not? You must be sure to come. Dear me! I can remember when everybody went to church on Sunday and then walked up and down Fifth Avenue. Fifth Avenue had trees then instead of shops and on the trees were such funny little worms. They used to hang down and crawl on you. The houses, too, were so nice. They all had piazzas and on the piazzas were honeysuckles. But I fear I am boasting. I don't really remember all that. It was my father who told me. Those must have been the good old days!"

Lennox again shifted his stick. "To-day I had hoped that you would look in on me."

The flute caressed the strain. "Yes. It was too bad! We had quite counted on it. Bachelor quarters must be so exciting."

"Well, not mine at any rate. They are rather dark."

"But that must make them all the more exciting! Blindman's buff! Hide and go seek! What fun you must have with your friends romping about!"

"My friends are too busy for that. Though to-day——"

"Yes?"

Lennox hesitated. He knew that this woman took no interest in him whatever, but he had intended to tell Margaret about Cassy.

Pleasantly Mrs. Austen prodded him. "Yes?"

"Nothing of any moment. This afternoon, Miss Cara, the girl who sang last night, came to see me. You may remember I told you I knew her father."

"It seems to me I do."

"Things have not gone well there and I advanced her a trifle for him."

Mrs. Austen unfurled her fan. It was all Honest Injun. She had not a doubt of it and never had. But if she had thought it a Sioux and Comanche story, it would have been the same to her.

"I am sorry you did not meet her," Lennox continued. "You might have lent her a hand."

"Professionally, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I might have her sing here," replied Mrs. Austen, who would have seen Cassy hanged first.

Lennox considered the picture: Mrs. Austen in the rôle of shepherdess, herding for Cassy's benefit the flock of sheep that society is. But the picture did not detain him. He stood up.

"That would be very good of you. Please tell Margaret I am sorry she has a headache and that I will look in on her to-morrow."

No you won't, thought Mrs. Austen, who said: "Yes, do."

In a moment, when he had gone, she looked again in the mirror. It showed her a woman who would not steal, unless she could do so undetectably; a woman who would not forge, because she did not know how. Crimes ridiculous or merely terrific she was too shrewd to commit. But there are crimes that the law cannot reach. There are cards, too, that fate may deal.

After looking at the woman, she looked at the cards. They were dreamlike. Even so, they needed stacking. Mrs. Austen arranged them carefully, ran them up her sleeve and floated to the room where Margaret waited.

As she entered, Margaret turned to her. Her face had that disquieting loveliness which Spanish art gave to the Madonna, the loveliness of flesh eclipsed certainly by the loveliness of the soul, but still flesh, still lovely.

At sight of it Mrs. Austen experienced the admiration tinged with the vitriol of jealousy that some mothers inject. Mrs. Austen had been a belle in the nights when there were belles but her belledom, this girl, who was not a belle, outshone. Yet the glow of it while necessarily physical had in it that which was moral. Unfortunately the radiance of moral beauty only those who are morally beautiful can perceive. Mrs. Austen was blind to it. It was her daughter's physical beauty that she always saw and which, though she was jealous of it, had, she knew, a value, precisely as beauty had a value in Circassia where, before the war, it fetched as much as a hundred Turkish pounds. In New York, where amateurs are keener and beauty is more rare, it may run into millions.

Commercially conscious of that, Mrs. Austen felt for the cards and carelessly produced one.

"Do you know, I believe we are to have a shower. Your young man got off just in time."

Margaret, who had glanced at the prostrate nymph, looked at her upright mother. "Do you mean that Keith has come—and gone?"

Mrs. Austen sat down and extracted another card. "My dear, when I went below he was coming in. We——"

Margaret, with her usual directness, interrupted. "But he is coming back?"

"That depends on you."

"On me? How? What do you mean?"

"That you must do as you like, of course. But if you elect to see him, for goodness' sake don't refer to it."

"Refer to it!" Margaret exclaimed. "Refer to what?"

"The vestal whom we saw this afternoon."

"I don't understand."

Indulgent Mrs. Austen motioned. "It is hardly proper that you should."

Margaret winced and coloured. "Your insinuation is horrible."

Cheerfully Mrs. Austen smiled. Margaret's start, her heightened colour, her visible annoyance, these things comforted her. A grandee of Spain warmed his hands at the auto-da-fé. There are people just like him. There are people that take comfort in another's distress. Mrs. Austen did not know that she resembled them. She had nothing but Margaret's welfare in view. Nothing but that and her own. Her own though came first.

She raised the fan. "My dear, you misjudge me. I always said that he is a good young man and I stick to it. He is good, far too good, too good to be true." With that, lowering the fan, she produced a trump. "Downstairs, a moment ago, he told me so."

Margaret gasped. "He told you—he told you——"

"Precisely. That is just what he did tell me."

Margaret straightened. "I don't believe it."

Mrs. Austen waved at her. "Oh, I don't mean that he has deceived you. He has done nothing of the kind. It is you who have deceived yourself. That was to be expected. At your age I deceived myself quite as thoroughly. I thought your father a conquering hero and he was merely a bore. But he

pointed a moral, though he adorned no tale. He married to settle down. That is this young man's idea and I must give him credit for the fact that while he has not deceived you, he did deceive me. I thought him a tedious person; whereas, not a bit of it. He is exceedingly lively. If he keeps it up, his wife will be blessed among women. But that is just it. He won't keep it up. He swore he would not and I believe him. He has turned over a new leaf. I can't cry over it, but it is really too bad."

Margaret, who had straightened, stiffened. "If I believed a word of what you tell me, I would forgive him entirely."

Mrs. Austen, unprepared for that, leaned forward. "My dear, I had no idea you were so sensible."

"I would forgive entirely," Margaret continued. "But I would never see him again."

How good that tasted! Mrs. Austen swallowed it contentedly. "Of course you will see him. You are not going blind, I suppose. But when you do see him, it will be only decent of you to ignore the matter which is not a fit subject for you to discuss."

Margaret, who had straightened and stiffened, now was rigid. "I certainly shall ignore it. It is not worth talking about."

Mrs. Austen leaned back. "Ah, my dear, how right you are. He could not tell you that he had loved wisely, it would not be very flattering. He could not say he had loved too well, for that would be embarrassing. What a pretty frock you have on. Did Marguerite make it? Of course he could not. It would not be nice at all. But to me he made a soiled breast of it. Don't you think the skirt a bit too long? Stand up a minute."

Margaret coloured again. She coloured with a flush that put two red spots on her. She did not believe it. She could not and would not. Yet credence, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth.

Mrs. Austen, noting the spots, knew that the card had been well played and leisurely selected another.

"Perhaps it is the way you are sitting. Yes, altogether it is quite ducky. I really must go to Marguerite on Monday. Don't let me forget about it or the dentist either. I shall have my hands full and my mouth also. The proper caper, too, apparently. That little dollymop, whom we saw this afternoon, had her hands full. Did you notice the roll of bills that she was counting? Such an enjoyable occupation! But it won't last. You need not worry on that score. He had been paying her off. He assured me of that and so unnecessarily. Why, I saw the whole thing at a glance. Anybody but you would have seen it too. But you are so theosophically nearsighted. It was for that reason I took you away. Now, though, he is going to begin on a clean slate. Those were his very words, and you, I suppose, are the clean slate. He has such original expressions, hasn't he? But there! I forgot. He did not mean me to tell you. In fact, he begged me not to."

From Margaret's face the flush retreating left it white with that whiteness which dismay creates. A bucket of mud had drenched her. It did more, it dazed her. The idea that the bucket was imaginary, the mud non-existent, that every word she had heard was a lie, did not occur to this girl who, if a Psyche, was not psychic. In her heart was the mud; in her mother's hand was the bucket. But the mire itself, he had put there. The evidence of her own eyes she

might have questioned. But he had admitted it and the fact that he had induced in her the purely animal feeling to get away, to be alone and to suffer unseen.

She left the room, went to her own, closed the door and at a prie-Dieu fell on her knees, not to pray—she knew that the Lords of Karma are not to be propitiated or coerced—but in humiliation.

In humiliation there may be self-pity and that is always degrading. With uncertain hands she tried to transform that pity into sorrow, not for herself, but for him. The burnt offering seared her. In the secret chambers of her being her young soul tripped and fell. For support she clutched at her creed. Ordinarily it would have sustained her. Ordinarily it would have told her that her suffering was the penalty for suffering which she had caused, a penalty that the gods of the doors that close behind our birth were measuring to her. Ordinarily she would have realised that in some anterior, enigmatic and forgotten life, she, too, had debased herself and that this cross was the punishment for that debasement. Ordinarily the creed would have sustained her. But as she clutched at it, it receded. Only the cross remained and that was too heavy.

In the drawing-room an indifferent nymph pointed a finger at hours, all of which wound and of which the last one kills.

In that room Mrs. Austen was writing a note. Addressed to Montagu Paliser, jr., esqre., it asked him to dinner.

X

IN the subway, the following evening, Cassy saw a man eyeing her. She turned and saw another man who also was eyeing her. On the seat opposite two women were discussing her clothes.

The clothes, her own manufacture, were not of the fashion, not behind it, or ahead of it, but above it. A mode, or a mood of her own, they consisted in a blue silk smock and a yellow cloth skirt. On the sleeves and about the neck of the smock there was also yellow, touches of it, with which the skirt married. Therewith she was hatless, rebellious and handsome.

Accustomed to the inquisitiveness of appraising eyes, she ignored the women as, already, she had ignored the men. With obliterating unconcern, she reduced them to the fluidity of the inchoate. Other matters occupied her, and, primarily, a trick, an extremely shabby one, from which she had not yet recovered.

The day before, after paying the butcher, the baker, and the punctual and pertinacious agent, she had scaled the walk-up where she found her father with the violin, on which, an hour earlier, Lennox had loaned her the money.

The spectacle flabbergasted her. Then, realising what Lennox had done, his iniquity struck her as hateful. At once, in an effort to account, however imaginatively, for the apparent sorcery of it all, she

tried to invent a fairy-tale. But the tale would not come. Nor was it needed. Her father dispensed with any. Impatient of detail, as the artist usually is, he required none. The extraordinary perspicacity of the police who had nailed and returned the violin instantaneously, this wizardry that would have thrown any one else into stupors of bewilderment, interested him not at all. He had the violin. That sufficed. The rest did not matter.

It mattered though and monumentally to Cassy. To owe the butcher, the baker, the candlestickmaker, and to have them look slantingly at you, that was disgusting. But to be beholden for a gift, which you had refused to accept, and which then, behind your back, was dumped in on you, that was degrading. Consequently, while conjecturing new versions of Perrault, versions which it relieved her to find were not wanted, she gnashed her milk-white teeth at Lennox, felt that she hated him, yet felt, too, and the feeling was maddening, that the hatred was very tender.

All this was irritating enough and the Tamburini had contrived to add to the irritation. It had been arranged that the fallen star was to come to the walk-up and accompany Cassy to the Splendor. Instead of which, at the last moment, the ex-diva had telephoned that she would join her at the hotel, and Cassy foresaw a tedious sitting about in the lobby, for Ma Tamby was always late. But when have misfortunes come singly? Cassy foresaw, too, that the tedium would not be attenuated by Paliser's conversation.

It was not for that, or for him, that she was then in the subway, but for dinner. Young, healthy and consequently carnal, though not otherwise carnal than

hunger can make you, she liked food, on condition that she had not prepared it, and—in particular, and why not?—she liked the savorously truffled menus that walk-ups lack. She had another reason for being in the subway, one that Ma Tamby had lodged, like a flea, in her ear.

But now, near the heart of Manhattan, the train had stopped. Cassy got out, looked at her white gloves, wondered if they smelled of benzine, decided that they did, took them off and went on to the Splendor where Paliser was waiting.

Other people appeared to be similarly occupied. In the high, wide hall were groups of careful men and careless women, the latter very scrumptious in their imported frocks. The sight of these Parisianisms abashed Cassy no more than her appearance abashed Paliser. Etiquette, Formality, the Proper Thing, the great inane gods of the ante-bellum heavens, he had never acknowledged and now, though locally their altars remained and their worship persisted, he knew they were forever dead, blown into the dust-bin of the things that were, tossed there in derision by that atheist, the War.

The careless women looked at Cassy and carefully looked away. The careful men looked at her and carelessly looked again. In the severity of the wide, high hall, the girl with her rebellious beauty and harlequin gown, struck a note which it lacked, struck two of them, the go-and-be-hanged-to-you and originality.

In evening clothes that said Savile Row, Paliser approached. "You are punctual as a comet and equally luminous."

Cassy, ignoring the remark, ignoring, too, the hand

that accompanied it, cut him short. "Haven't seen Madame Tamburini, have you?"

Paliser's hair had the effect of a mirror. He smoothed the back of it. The ex-diva he had certainly seen and not later than just before she telephoned to Cassy. But it is injudicious, and also tiresome, to tell everything. With the wave of a cheque, the complicity of the former first-lady had been assured, and assured moreover without a qualm on her part. Ma Tamby did not know what it is to have a qualm—which she could not have spelled if she had known. She was differently and superiorly educated. In the university that life is, she had acquired encyclopedias of recondite learning. She knew that ice is not all that it is cracked up to be: that a finger in the pie is better than two in the fire, and that angels have been observed elsewhere than at Mons—learning which, as you may see, is surprising.

Over the ham and eggs of an earlier evening, the syllables of Paliser's name had awakened echoes of old Academy nights and Mapleson's "grand revivals" of the *Trovatore*, echoes thin and quavering, yet still repeating hymns in glory of the man's angelic papa. On the way from ham and eggs to Harlem, she had, in consequence, conjured, for Cassy's benefit, with performing fleas. But when, on this afternoon, M. P. jr., had come and waved cheques at her, she had felt that her worst hopes were realised, that her finger was really in the pie, and she had agreed to everything, which, however, for the moment, was nothing at all, merely to abandon Cassy that evening; merely also to collaborate later in the evocation of a myth, and meanwhile to keep at it with the fleas.

Now, in the hall of the Splendor, as Paliser patted

the back of his head, he was enjoying Cassy's open-air appearance that needed only a tennis-racket to be complete.

Cassy glanced about. She had a penny or two more than her carfare and yet, if she had owned the shop, she could not have appeared more at ease in this smartest of smart inns, a part of which, destiny, in its capriciousness, was to offer her.

"No," he answered. "But I have a private room somewhere. She can find her way there, unless you prefer palms and an orchestra."

"I do," said Cassy, to whom a room with this man said only boredom and who liked to see what was going on.

Then when, presently, they were seated at a table, to which the chastened captain of the ham-and-egg night had piloted the way, Cassy beheld what she had never beheld before, and what few mortals ever do behold, a cradled bottle of Clos de Vougeot. But to her, the royal crû was very much like the private room. It said nothing. A neighbouring table was more eloquent.

Among the people seated there was an imperial woman with an imperial manner, whom Cassy instantly recognised. She was *prima donna*, *prima donna assoluta*, and though Cassy did not know it—nor would it have interested her if she had known—*disso-luta* also.

To be in her shoes!

In that seven-leagued dream, she forgot Paliser, the delinquent Tamburini, the trick that Lennox had played. In a golden gloom, on a wide stage, to a house packed to the roof, Cassy was bowing. Her

final roulade had just floated on and beyond, lost now in cyclonic bravas.

"It was the Duc d'Aumale," Paliser was saying.

"Eh?" Abruptly Cassy awoke.

"Or, if not, some other chap who, recognising it, ordered his regiment to halt and present arms."

"To whom?"

"To the vineyard where the grape in that bottle was grown."

Cassy shook out a napkin. "You talk just like my janitress. I never understand a word she says."

But now a waiter was bringing delicacies other than those obtainable in Harlem; in particular, a dish that had the merit of pleasing Cassy.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Muskrat."

"What!"

"Muskrat with terrapin for a pseudonym. The pseudonym shows imagination. Let us be thankful for that. Gastronomy is bankrupt. Formerly it was worshipped. Formerly gastronomy was a goddess. To-day the sole tributes consist in bills-of-fare that are just like the Sahara minus the oases. It is the oases we want and it is muskrat we get. That is all wrong. The degree of culture that any nation may claim is shown in its cookery and if there is anything viler than what we get here it must be served in Berlin. It must have been Solon who said: 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.' He added, or should have, that animals feed, man dines and, when permitted, dines devoutly. There are dishes, as there are wines, to which one should rise and bow. But hereabouts it is only by special dispensation that one gets them. In a hotel such as this there is an outward show of reverence, but it is sheer

hypocrisy; of real piety there is none, a sham attempt to observe the sacred rites without knowing how. I admit I don't know either. From me the divine afflatus has been withheld. But elsewhere I have been conscious of the presence. Once or twice I was blessed. Here, though, in default of shrines there should be chairs. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, should establish a few. When I was in college I was taught everything that it is easiest to forget. If the youth of the land were instructed in gastronomy we would all be wiser and better. Chairs on gastronomy, that is what we need!"

Cassy laughed. "Why not tables?"

Paliser laughed with her. The laughter was a bond. It joined them however tenuously. It was what he had been driving at. Accustomed to easy successes, Cassy's atmosphere, with its flavour of standoffishness and indifference, appealed to this man, who had supped on the facile and who wanted the difficult. Cassy, he could have sworn, would supply it and, if he had, he would have sworn very truly.

Meanwhile the muskrat had gone. Dishes less false but equally fair had followed. Now, with the air of a conjurer, the waiter just showed them an entremets which he hastened to serve. It was a soufflée.

At it, Cassy, just showing the point of her strawberry tongue, exclaimed without rancour: "Ma Tamby has thrown us over."

Paliser lit a cigarette. "She may be singing in the private room."

Cassy laughed again. "Yes. 'Una voce poco fa!' That would be just the thing—wouldn't it?—to sing privately in private."

Paliser answered, though what, she did not hear. The orchestra drowned it and for a moment she con-

sidered him, conscious that he was less objectionable than he had seemed, yet entirely unconscious that such objection as she had experienced was due to his extreme good-looks, which in a man are always objectionable to a woman when she herself is handsome, for they make him resemble her and, in so doing, constitute an encroachment on her prerogatives, which, in itself, is an affront.

Cassy, ignorant of the psychology of it, equally unaware that familiarity which may breed contempt can also dissolve dislike, and feeling merely a lessening of her instinctive hostility, told herself that he was perhaps not as cocky as he looked and drank of the glass before her.

The Clos de Vougeot which, to the educated palate, is art, literature and song combined, meant nothing more to her than if it had been Médoc. She drank it because it was there at her hand, as she would have drunk water, without savouring it, without any realisation of the enormity of the crime. Yet though it meant nothing, nothing at least of which she was aware, the royal crû was affecting her. It modified and mollified, admonishing her that this man was an inoffensive insect who, circumstances favouring, might, as Ma Tamby when inserting the flea had told her, put her father on his feet.

In just what the favouring circumstances could consist, the fallen star had not bothered to indicate, and she had not bothered because they were too obvious and also because she was sure that Cassy was not insane.

Paliser abandoned his cigarette. "If you like, we might look in at the Metropolitan. I believe I have a box."

Apart from down-stage and the centre of it, apart,

too, from the flys and the dressing-rooms, Cassy's imagination had not as yet conceived anything more beckoning than a box at the opera, even though, as on this occasion, the opera happened to be a concert. "Why, yes. Only——" Pausing, she looked about. The imperial lady had gone.

"Only what?" Paliser very needlessly asked for he knew.

"I fear I am a bit overdressed."

"Not for Sunday. The house will be full and nobody in it. Besides, what do you care?"

Cassy shrugged. "Personally, not a rap. It was of you I was thinking."

Paliser, who had been signing the check and feeing the waiter, looked at her. "I did not know that you were so considerate."

Cassy, in surprise not at him, but at herself, laughed. "Nor did I."

Paliser stood up and drew back her chair. "Be careful. You might become cynical. It is in thinking of others that cynicism begins."

The platitude slipped from him absently. He had no wish for the concert, no wish to hear Berlines trulls and bubonic bassi bleat. But, for the tolerably delicate enterprise that he had in hand, there were the preliminary steps which could only be hastened slowly and anything slower than the Metropolitan on a Sunday night, it was beyond him to conjecture.

But though on that evening a basso did bleat, it may be that he was not bubonic. Moreover he was followed by a soprano who, whether trullish or not, at any rate was not Berlines and whose voice had the lusciousness of a Hawaiian pineapple. But the selections, which were derived from old Italian cupboards, displeased Paliser, who called them painted mush.

But not twice! Cassy turned her back on him. The painted mush shook stars in her ears, opened vistas on the beyond. Save for him she would have been quite happy. But his remark annoyed her. It caused her to revise her opinion. Instead of an inoffensive insect he was an offensive fool. None the less, as the concert progressed, she revised it again. On entering the box she had seen his name on the door. The memory of that, filtering through the tinted polenta from the ancient cupboards, softened her. A man so gifted could express all the imbecilities he liked. Elle s'enfichait.

As a result, before it was over, in lieu of her back, she gave him the seduction of her smile, and, later when, in his car, on the way to the walk-up, he spoke of future dinners, fresher songs, she had so far forgotten the painted mush insult, that momentarily she foresaw but one objection. She had nothing to wear and frankly, with entire unconcern, she out with it.

For that he had a solution which he kept to himself. The promptly obliterating stare with which she would have reduced him to non-existence, he dodged in advance.

Apparently changing the subject, he said: "You know—or know of—Mrs. Beamish, don't you?"

"Never heard of her," said Cassy, entirely unaware that no one else ever had either.

"She was at the Bazaar the other night and admired your singing."

"Very good of her I am sure," replied Cassy, who, a born anarchist and by the same token a born autocrat, loathed condescension.

Paliser corrected it. "No, not good—appreciative. She wants you to sing at her house. If you are will-

ing, could she arrange about it through Madame Tamburini?"

"If she tried very hard, I suppose she might," Cassy, with the same loftiness, answered.

But the loftiness was as unreal as Mrs. Beamish. Inwardly she jubilated, wondering how much she would get. A hundred? In that case she could repay Lennox at once. At the thought of it, again she revised her opinion. Paliser was young and in her judgment all young men were insects. On the other hand he was serviceable. Moreover, though he looked cocky, he did not presume. He talked rot, but he did not argue. Then, too, his car was a relief.

But now the car, after bolting through the Park and flying along the Riverside, had swerved. It was mounting the upper reaches of the longest highway on the planet. There it swerved again. From Broadway it barked loudly into a side-street where easily, with a soapy slide, it stopped.

Paliser got out, preceded Cassy to the steps of the walk-up and smiled in her face. "When?"

Cassy, the revised opinion of him about her, gave him her hand. "Ask the telephone."

The hall took her. She was scaling the stairs. On the way Mrs. Beamish accompanied her. She wished she could tell her father. Yet, if she told him, how could she account for what she did with the money? And would it be a hundred? Perhaps fifty, perhaps less.

But Paliser saw to it that Mrs. Beamish behaved properly. On the morrow Ma Tamby dumped in Cassy's astonished lap two hundred and fifty—less ten per cent., business is business—for samples of the bel canto which Mrs. Beamish was not to hear, and for an excellent reason, there was no such person.

XI

MRS. AUSTEN looked at Lennox, who had been looking at her, but who was then looking at the rug, in the border of which were arabesques. He did not see them. The rug was not there. The room itself had disappeared. The nymph, the dial, the furniture, the decorations and costly futilities with which the room was cluttered, all these had gone. Mrs. Austen had ceased to be. In that pleasant room, in the presence of this agreeable woman, Lennox was absolutely alone, as, in any great crisis of the emotions, we all are.

Of one thing he was conscious. He was suffering atrociously. Pain blanketed him. But though the blanket had the poignancy of thin knives, he kept telling himself that it was all unreal.

He raised his eyes. During the second in which they had been lowered, a second that had been an eternity in hell, his expression had not altered. He was taking it, apparently at least, unmoved.

Mrs. Austen, who was looking at him, saw it and thought: He is a gentleman. The reflection encouraged her and she sighed and said: "Believe me, I am sorry."

Lennox did not believe her, but he let it go. What he did believe was that Margaret could not see him. But whether she would, if she could, was another matter. On Saturday he had expected her at his

rooms. She had not come. In the evening he had called. She had a headache. On the following day he had returned. She was not feeling well. Now on this third day, Mrs. Austen, who on the two previous occasions had received him, once more so far condescended, yet on this occasion to tell him that he was free, that it was Margaret's wish, that the engagement was ended.

In so telling him, Mrs. Austen told, for a wonder, the truth, though as will sometimes happen even to the best of us, not all the truth. It were extravagant to have expected it of her. But she told all that she thought good for him; more exactly good for Margaret; more precisely for herself.

It was then that the pleasant room with its clutter of costly futilities disappeared and this agreeable woman ceased to be. The avalanche of the modulated announcement sent Lennox reeling not merely out of the room, but out of the world, deeply into hell.

It was then, too, that with a sigh, modulated also, Mrs. Austen had added: "Believe me, I am sorry."

Lennox looked at her. "You say that Margaret wants our engagement broken. Why?"

"She has changed her mind."

"So I infer. But why?"

"Because she is a woman."

"But not the ordinary woman. It is the ordinary woman who changes her mind—when she has one to change. Margaret is not of that kind. Margaret is not the kind to promise herself to a man and then throw him over. You will forgive me if I speak heatedly, but I do not believe it."

With frosty indulgence Mrs. Austen reassured him. "You do not believe that I will forgive you? But, really, there is nothing to forgive. Though,

whether Margaret is ordinary or superior, has nothing to do with it. Dear me, no. Women are not what they were. One often hears that and often, too, one hears people wondering why. That always amuses me. The reason is so simple, isn't it? Women are not what they were because they used to be girls. Before that they were children. At one time they were babes. Naturally they change. They can't help it. It must be a general law. Or at least one may suppose so. One may suppose, too, that, in changing, they develop and in developing acquire the extraordinary ability to think things over. That is just what Margaret had done. It is no reflection on you, Mr. Lennox, and I should be very sorry if you thought so. I am sure Margaret has the highest esteem for you. I know that I have."

Mrs. Austen, smiling frostily as she lied, thought: Now why doesn't he take it and go? I hope he won't be tedious.

Lennox too had his thoughts. She is trying to swamp me in words, he told himself. That angered him and he showed it.

"What are these things? When I last saw Margaret she said nothing about any things. There was no change in her then. I would stake my life that she had no idea of breaking our engagement. There must be a reason for it. What is it?"

Arrogantly Mrs. Austen took it up. "There is no reason for your raising your voice, at any rate. As for the things, they ought to be obvious. In addition to habits and customs, very suitable in Wall Street no doubt, but not otherwise appealing, Margaret has found you a bit rough, high-tempered, domineering for all I know to the contrary, and——"

That's a damned lie, thought Lennox, who aggress-

sively cut in: "Margaret never found me anything of the kind. What is more I will thank you to understand that I will not accept this dismissal—if it be one—from you."

There is a show of decency that is due to any woman. But the veneer of civilisation is very thin. From beneath it, the potential troglodyte, that lurks in us all, is ready enough to erupt. Ready and eager then, he was visible in Lennox' menacing eyes, manifest in his threatening voice.

Mrs. Austen saw the brute, saw rather that little, if anything, restrained Lennox from jumping up, banging about, hunting for Margaret's room, entering there and catechising her violently. Margaret was ill but never too ill to tell the truth. Once he learned that, there was the fat in the fire.

She had no time to lose. From the wardrobe of the actress that she was, she snatched at an oleaginous mask and with the mucilage of it smiled at him.

"Why, of course not. Not for a moment would I have you accept it from me. I never dreamed of such a thing. It wouldn't be right. Margaret shall tell you herself. She would be here now, but the poor child had such a wretched night. You never had neuralgia, have you? At her age I was a martyr to it. I remember I took something that ended in 'ine.' Yesterday I suggested it but the doctor would not hear of it. Said she needed building up. Spoke of her just as though she were a town out West; so unsympathetic I thought him, but of course I did not say so. He might have charged extra and he is expensive enough as it is, and always so ready to talk about his own affairs, just like my dentist. I told him once—the dentist I mean—that I really could not afford to pay him thirty dollars an hour to hear about his wife and I

don't think he liked it. I know I didn't when I got his bill. But where was I? Oh, yes. To-morrow or the next day, as soon as Margaret is the least bit better, you will be sure to have a line from her and if you do not, and you care to, you must certainly look in. For you must always regard us as friends. Me at any rate. Won't you, Mr. Lennox?"

Moistening her lips, mentally she continued: Yes, count on that. But inwardly she relaxed. Such danger as there may have been had gone. Under the dribble of the mucilage the fire in his eyes had flickered and sunk. He was too glued now for revolt. So she thought, but she did not know him.

During the sticky flow of her words, he knew she was trying to gammon him. But he knew quite as well that Margaret would make no such attempt, and he knew it for no other reason than because he knew she was incapable of it. Incidentally he determined what he would do. Having determined it, he stood up.

"Very good. I shall expect to hear from Margaret to-morrow. If I do not hear I will come, and when I come——"

Lennox paused and compressed his lips. The compression finished the sentence. If come he did, no power of hers, or of any one else, would budge him an inch until he saw Margaret and had it out with her.

"Good-evening," he added and Mrs. Austen found herself looking at his retreating back which, even in retreat, was a menace.

"Merciful fathers!" she exclaimed, and, with that sense of humour which is the saving grace, the dear woman put her hand to her stays. She was feeling for her heart. She had none. Or any appetite, she presently told a servant who came to say that dinner was served.

She misjudged herself. For twenty-five minutes, in an adjoining room, she ate steadily and uncomplainingly. She had bouillon, skate in black butter, cutlets in curl-papers, sweetbread and cockscombs, a cold artichoke, hot almond pudding, an apricot, a bit of roquefort, a pint of claret, a thimble of *bénédictine* and not a twinge, none of the indigestion of square-dealing, none of gastritis of good faith. She was a well-dressed ambition, intent on her food. No discomfort therefore. On the contrary. Margaret was in bed—safe there. Fate and the cook were kind.

With the taste of the liqueur still in her mouth, she went to her daughter who was ill with one of those *maladies* which, being primarily psychical, science cannot treat. Science is a classification of human ignorance. It has remedies for the flesh, it has none for the soul. The remedies exist, but they are dispensed only by the great apothecaries that time and philosophy are.

At the moment neither was available. Behind Margaret's forehead a monster crouched and crunched. That was nothing. It was in the tender places of her heart that the girl agonised and by comparison to the torture there, the monster was benign.

Margaret was nineteen, which is a very mature age; perhaps the most mature, since all girlhood lies behind it. Beyond are the *pharmacopœias* of time and, fortune favouring, the sofas of philosophy. But these sofas, even when within reach, are not adapted to everybody. To the young, they are detestable. Reposefully they admonish that nothing is important. They whisper patience to the impatient. To hope, they say, "Be still"; to desire, "Be quiet"; to wisdom, "Be foolish."

Conversation of that kind is very irritating, when you have heard it, which Margaret never had. She

was otherwise ignorant. She did not know that a sage wrote a book in praise of folly. But she acted as though she knew it by heart. She believed, as many of us do believe, that love confers the right to run a fence around the happy mortals for whom we care. It is a very astounding belief. Margaret, who believed in many wonderful things, believed in that and, being credulous, believed also that her betrothed had crawled under the fence and into what mire! It polluted her, soiled her thoughts, followed and smeared her in the secret chambers of her being. Any cross is heavy. This cross was degrading.

In her darkened room, on her bed of pain, she had shrunk from it. Her forehead was a coronet of fire. That was nothing. A greater pain suppresses a lesser one. The burn of her soul was a moxa to the burn of the flesh.

The cross, at first, seemed to her more than she could bear. She tried to put it from her. Failing in that, she tried to endure it. But there are times and occasions when resignation in its self-effacement resembles suicide. She tried to resign herself, but she could not, her young heart rebelled.

In that rebellion, evil came, peered at her, sat at her side, pulled at her sleeve, sprang at her. The evil was hatred for this man who had taken her love and despoiled it. She clasped it to her. It bruised but it comforted. It dulled both the flame in her forehead and the shame in her soul. Then as suddenly she began to cry.

Philosophy she lacked, but theosophy, which is a pansophy, she possessed—when she did not need it. Now, when she needed it most, it was empty as the noise in the street. Even otherwise it could not have changed the unchangeable course of events.

There are sins that are scarlet. There are others, far worse, that are drab. Melancholy tops them. It is a mere duty to be serene. That she could not be. She could not face life, as life perhaps is. She could not smile at a lover who loved elsewhere. It was not herself, it was he who prevented her. So she thought and for hours in her darkened room she washed her hands of him, washed them in tears. It took a wise man to write the praise of folly.

The door of the room opened. It opened slowly, noiselessly, obviously. With exasperating precautions Mrs. Austen entered. The taste of *bénédictine* was still in her mouth and, savouring it, she whispered :

“Are you asleep?”

“No.”

“Will you eat anything?”

“No.”

“Are you able to talk?”

Margaret turned. She could talk, but to what end and to whom? Certainly not to her mother, who possessed in its perfection, the household art of misinterpreting everything. Margaret had tried to love her. But perhaps any affection is a habit when it does not happen to be an instinct. The habit had never been formed, the instinct had been repressed. Always her mother had treated her with that indulgence which is as empty as an unfilled grate. There was no heat there. You could not warm your heart at it. But a child must love some one. Margaret had begun by loving her mother. That is the way with children. They begin by loving their parents. Later they judge them. Sometimes, though not always, they forgive. One should not judge anybody. Margaret knew that, but she was a human being. She thought her mother a worldly woman. The fact that she was false as Judas

was not apparent to this girl whose knowledge of Iscariotism was as hearsay as her knowledge of gorillas.

Now, as she turned in her bed, it was in defence against intrusion. Deference to her mother she had always observed. But she could not admit her to the privacy of her thoughts and, in turning her face to the wall, she told herself that she would not be cross-questioned.

Mrs. Austen had no intention of putting her daughter in the confessional. Anything of the kind would have bored her. Besides, what she thought was unimportant. It was what she did or might do that mattered.

Vacating the door she approached the bed. "Are you feeling any better?"

Margaret was feeling, if possible, worse. But she never complained, or, if she had to complain, then the complaint was solely by way of explanation. She turned again.

"For if you are," Mrs. Austen continued, "I ought to say something."

Margaret put a hand to her forehead.

But Mrs. Austen persisted. "It is important."

Margaret's eyes were open. She closed them and said: "Yes, mother, what is it?"

Through the door came light from the hall. Mrs. Austen looked about. Nearby was a chair on which was one of those garments, made of *franfreluches*, which the French call a *Jump-from-bed*. Removing it, she sat down.

"It is too bad. I know you don't feel like discussing affairs of State, but it is Luxemburg all over again. If I were alone concerned, I am sure I would capitulate. But where the State is concerned, and by that I mean

you, I am like the little grand-duchess—pretty child, from her pictures, didn't you think?—and I must resist the invader. It is true, I don't know exactly what the grand-duchess did do, though they said she sat in a motor on a bridge and flourished a revolver. But you never can tell. I daresay she and her maids of honour hid in a cellar. Perhaps we may have to."

Margaret lowered her hand. "Mother, what are you talking about?"

"Your young man, of course. What else? A half-hour ago, he was roaring and stamping about and calling me a liar. If it had not been for my dead body, he would have rushed in here and killed you. My dead body, or what I told him about passing over it, was the revolver that I flourished. He has gone, but he swore he would return. Now, unless you rally to the colours, we will have to hide in the cellar, or rather, as we haven't any, in the pantry. Don't you think you could eat a bit of sweetbread, or perhaps some almond pudding?"

Again Margaret put her hand to her forehead. "Don't say that, mother. Keith did not call you a liar and it is not like him to roar and stamp about."

"My dear, I don't wonder you don't believe me. He went on like a madman. He could not get over the fact that his dollymop was one too many for you. He seemed to think that it was none of your business."

"Don't."

"My dear Margaret, you must do me the justice to admit that I stood up for him. I said he was an attractive young man. So he is. But that is just it. Attractive young men are most unreliable and reliable young men are most unattractive. At your age, I used to like them fair and false. That was your

father's fault. He perverted me. He was so domestic!"

It was an old wound that Mrs. Austen touched then and under it Margaret winced. "The poor dear! He was a saint and you know it."

"Know it! I should say I did. I know too that he made me hate saints. But you love them and thought you had one, instead of which you got a devil. Your luck is far better than mine. If you take my advice, you will hang on to him like grim death. It is not too late. To-morrow he will be here, thundering at the gates."

Dimly at the moment the girl's creed turned a ray on her. She lifted her head.

"He will not thunder at the gates and he is not what you say. But perhaps I am. I may have done worse than he has and what he has done is my punishment."

It was very little but it was too much. Mrs. Austen, in spite of her facile digestion, gagged at it.

"If that is theosophy, I will believe it when I am old, fat and a Hun."

Margaret sank back. "But I am sorry you have been annoyed. It won't happen again. I will write to him."

Later, she did write.

Forgive me, dear Keith, if I cause you pain, but I feel that I am not suited to you. Forgive me therefore for not recognising it sooner. I have thought it all over and, though it wrings my heart to say it, I cannot see you again. Forgive me and forget.

MARGARET.

XII

HELL was supposed to be very hot, very red, full of pugnacious demons. Educated people do not believe in it any more. It is curious how ignorant educated people have become. Hell is an actual plane, less vivid than was formerly imagined, not hot but cold, grey rather than red, but amply provided with demons, with the devils of self-accusation, with the fiends of insoluble queries. Very real and very actual, it is surprising how many educated people are there. The oddity of that is increased by the fact that they regard it as a private establishment. They regard their hell as unique. Perhaps the idea flatters them. Yet sooner or later everybody enters it. Hell may seem private. It is universal.

Headlong into it, Margaret's letter precipitated Lennox. Being a man, he struggled up. But not out. In hell there are no signposts. It takes time to find one's way. It takes more, it takes resignation. When both have been acquired, the walls part of themselves. The aspect of life has altered, but you are free.

Lennox, in struggling up, encountered the demons of enigmatic riddles. Each word of Margaret's letter they converted into a Why? They thrust it at him, demanding an answer. But the answer her heart alone possessed. That heart had been his. It was his no longer. The heart that she had given him, she had taken away. Nothing could be simpler and nothing more mysterious. The mystification was complete, but not the suffering. Suffering is never complete.

However deep the hell, there is always a deeper one.

From the letter he looked at the walls. They were dumb. There was no answer for the demons there, not anywhere, perhaps, except among werewolves, basilisks and Mrs. Austens. These monsters did not occur to him. The monstrous letter sufficed. But Margaret was still too near, her vows were too recent for him to credit it, and the fact that he could not disclosed itself in those words which all have uttered, all at least before whom the inexplicable has sprung.

"It is impossible!"

Yet there it was. Yet there too was something else. But what? At once he was back again in the issueless circle of infernal questions.

The day before he had known that something was amiss. The attitude of Mrs. Austen had been too assured, too venomous, too smiling, for him to doubt it. But though he did not doubt that, not for a second did he doubt Margaret either. Always aware of the woman's hostility, he had been equally aware that it could not influence the girl. Not for a moment therefore had he accepted the statement that the engagement was broken. At the time he had thought that when next he had a word with Margaret it would all be explained. But all what? His life was as clean as his face. It was not that then. On the other hand he was not rich. By the same token, Margaret's only idea of money was to help others with it. It was not that then either. Nor was it that she had not loved him. She had loved him. He could have sworn it and not out of vanity, for he had none, but because never could she have promised herself to him if she had not. None the less, she could not see him again. She had thought it over. She was not suited to him. He was told to forget her. Why?

That Why, repeating itself, forced him deeper into the circles of which hell is made.

But even in hell despair is brief. Unless it consume you utterly, and it would not be hell if it did, it goads. It compels you to seek an issue. Apart from time, which is very slow, and resignation, which is never prompt, there is another portal.

A poet, who discovered it, scrawled on it: "*Lascia la donna e studia la matematica*"—a cryptogram which subsequent pilgrims variously deciphered. To some, it spelled Thought; to others, Action. Action is thought put in motion.

Lennox, to whom time was too dilatory and resignation too remote, happened on the device which he translated after his manner.

But however you construe the hieroglyph, the door must be demolished before you get out. Across the door is written: Hope. It is a very hard door to crack. When you succeed you are covered with splinters. They cling to you and pierce you. Joiners, carpenters, pilgrims, poets and fiends have a name for them. They call the splinters Regrets. Though you have escaped, they accompany you. Hell encircles you still.

It was on the day following the conversation with Mrs. Austen that Lennox received Margaret's letter. In his dark rooms it was waiting. A moment previous he had intended to go to her. He had it all planned. Mrs. Austen could say what she liked; the physician might interfere; he would submit to no one. He proposed to see her, to adjust it, to swing up and out from the circles which already were closing about him.

On leaving Mrs. Austen he had gone to dinner. He could not eat. He had gone to bed. He could not

sleep. In the morning his face was flushed. Always fit, hard as nails, these phenomena perplexed. Yet he knew it was not illness that produced them. What he did not know was that poison had. The poison was anger, an unphilosophic emotion which disturbs the circulation, the stomach and social intercourse. He could have wrung Mrs. Austen's neck.

In that murderous mood he went to Wall Street and in that mood returned. Already hell was gaping. Headlong into it the letter threw him. Being a man he sought and found the door, smashed it and passed out. Not at once however. It took him many a sleepless hour before he deciphered the device *Lascia la donna. Leave the lady?* Certainly. Since she so wished, what else in decency could he do? Go and badger her with complaints and questions? Not he. But how do you translate: *Studia la matematica?* The dictionary that is in every man, who is a man, told him. Then he knew. Meanwhile the flush in departing left him grey.

In every affection there is the germ of hate. Margaret, confronted by the unawaited, hated Lennox. Lennox, confronted by the inexplicable, hated Margaret. Hatred is love turned inside out. Love is perhaps a fermentation of the molecules of the imagination. In that case so also is hate. Of all things mystery disturbs the imagination most. Margaret could not understand how Lennox could have acted as he had. Lennox could not understand how Margaret could act as she did. Dual misunderstanding, in which the imagination fermented. Hence the hate. Yet each, in hating, loved the other. Each felt the splinters which, as Browning somewhere noted, kept fresh and fine. Only a touch and the splinters would have joined.

Mrs. Austen, for all her horrible shrewdness, could not have prevented that. But pride, that gives so many of us a fall, was more potent than she. Margaret, insulted, could but turn away. Lennox, dismissed, could but let her go.

Any emotion is unbecoming. Pride is merely ridiculous. It resides in the youthful-minded, however old. In residing in these young people, it resisted the touch that would have combined them and, through its opposition, made one of them ill and the other grey. To be proud! How splendid it seems and how stupid it is. Hell is paved with just such imbecilities.

It is said of Dante that children peered at him and whispered: "That man has been in hell."

None of the children that clubmen are, pointed at Lennox, though two of them whispered. The others did not know, not yet at least. But Verelst knew and Jones guessed. The guess was due to the romantic profession that endows a novelist with the wonderful faculty of putting two and two together.

Hitherto, that is since the engagement was announced and, for that matter, long previously, Lennox had passed the evening in Park Avenue. Where else would he have passed it? After the rupture he sat about and read all the papers. When a man is down and out that is just what he does do, though not necessarily in the Athenæum Club.

Jones, noticing it, rapidly divined the reason which Verelst confirmed.

"Yes, her mother told me."

It was in a club window, of an afternoon. Before them was Fifth Avenue which, in the Aprils of not so long ago, used to be a horse-show of fair faces, ravish-

ing hats, discreet liveries, folded arms and yards of yodling brass.

Verelst, eyeing the usurping motors, added: "It is because of some girl I believe, or rather I don't believe it."

Jones sat back. Instantly the motors were replaced by the picture of a girl whose face was noble and reserved. He had seen the face at the Bazaar. He had seen Lennox talking to it. Afterward Lennox had told him that the girl was Portuguese. The picture was attractive but unconvincing. In agreement with Verelst he was about to say so. But behind him he heard a voice that he knew and he switched and said:

"What a remarkable country Portugal is! Born dumb, she spoke twice: once when she gave Asia to Europe, again when she presented the *Lusiades* to the world. Her history is resumed in two miracles, a discovery and a masterpiece. But when the Cape of Good Hope was succeeded by Camoens, once more she relapsed into a silence that was broken only when she shouted her defiance at the Huns."

Now though that voice was addressing them. Both turned and Lennox asked: "What are you talking about—war?"

"Sit down," said Verelst, who gave him a hand.

Jones gave him another. "What else is there to talk about? It will be talked of forever. So will that scrofulous Kaiser. Unfortunately he knows it and that pleases him. Last year or the year before he called for the death and destruction of all who opposed him. With singular modesty he added: 'God who speaks through my mouth so orders!' Loti claims that what spoke through him was a hyena. Loti

is lacking in literary sobriety. When a hyena has eaten he is at peace with the world. But when was bestiality ever filled? It is insatiable and so is this thug whom God, at most, may have permitted to look in the mirror without vomiting. Meanwhile we stand by. A generation ago we fought for Cuba. What is Hecuba to us in comparison to the Anima Mundi?"

Verelst turned on the novelist. "And what is literary sobriety? You are hurling words in massed formation."

Jones smiled at him. "Where is my harp?"

"You mean your megaphone," Lennox put in. "You are always rehearsing copy. One of these days I may give you some."

"From the front?" Jones asked.

"Yes, though I don't see how you knew. The President has asked for war. Why aren't we up and at 'em? If Congress hems and haws over it much longer, I'll get my gun and join the Foreign Legion."

Jones nodded. He had guessed that also and he said: "Wait and join the legions here. At present, the country is alarmingly apathetic. The man in the subway is muddled. The call to arms does not stir him. The issues, clear enough to us, seem to him mixed as macaroni. He does not understand a war that is three thousand miles away. But in a year, every man in the country—a country that has never been beaten!—will be in it body and soul. Undividedly, shoulder to shoulder, we will be in it as we have never been in anything before."

The novelist touched a bell. "Lennox, have a Bronx. Verelst, what will you take? I'll wager a pippin that war is declared to-morrow."

"Done," said Verelst—who lost it.

XIII

THE two hundred and fifty—less ten per cent— which an imaginary Mrs. Beamish had paid for the pleasure of not hearing Cassy sing, transported the girl who was not given to transports. These subsiding, she viewed the matter from its business aspect. She needed a frock, a wrap, a hat, gloves, shoes and certain things that are nowhere visible except in advertisements, shop-windows and extreme privacy. Also, her hair required tralalaing. Meanwhile, first and foremost, Lennox must be paid. The subsidy was not too much by a penny. These considerations occupied but an instant.

“When is it?” she asked the Tamburini, who, a moment before, had dumbfounded her with the money.

“When is what?” inquired the ex-star who already had forgotten Mrs. Beamish.

“Why, the concert!”

Carlotta Tamburini was dressed like a fat idol, in silk and false pearls. There the idolatry ceased. In her hand was an umbrella and on her head a hat of rose-leaves which a black topknot surmounted. About her shoulders was a feather boa. It seemed a bit mangy. Seated on Cassy’s bed she looked at a window that gave on a wall. Cassy was standing. Behind Cassy was a door which the extinguished light had closed. Beyond, in the living-room, was the mar-

quis. Anything that he did not hear would not hurt him.

"Oh, she'll let us know."

"What sort of a catamount is she?"

At that the former prima donna's imagination balked. But she got something out. "Nice enough. What do you care?"

"I hate all those snobs."

"So do I," said the Tamburini, who worshipped the breed even when non-existent. "But don't go and include him. If it hadn't been for him——"

"Was he with her?"

"You ought to have heard the way he went on about you. She said: 'Why, Monty, I do believe you'd like to marry her.'"

Cassy's mouth twitched as she munched it. "She presumed to say that! She's an insolent beast."

"He shut her up, I can tell you. He said if he got on his knees, you wouldn't dust your feet on him."

"That jackanapes! I should say not!"

"You might say worse. Take the Metro. You're spat on if you're down and spat at if you're up. A dog's own life." Lifting her voice, the fat woman sang: "Croyez-moi car j'ai passé par là."

"What has that to do with it?"

Nothing whatever, the Tamburini truthfully reflected but omitted to say so. Paliser, in producing Mrs. Beamish, had also produced the programme. With both was a cheque. With the cheque was the assurance of another and a bigger one. She had only to earn it. To earn it she had only to follow the programme. The poor soul was trying to. The job was not easy. Cassy was skittish. A pull on the rein and she would kick the apple-cart over.

Femininely she discounted it all. Cassy was not worth the time, the trouble, particularly the careful handling. There were girls in plenty, quite as good-looking, who, without stopping to count two, or even one, would jump at it. But there you were! Paliser did not want partridges that flew broiled into his mouth. A true sportsman, he liked to snare the bird. The feminine in her understood that also. Besides it was all grist for her mill. But the grist was uphill, and if the noble marquis got so much as an inkling of it, he was just the sort of damn fool to whip out his sword-cane and run her through. The honour of the Casa-Evora, what? Yet, being on the job, she buckled to it.

"What will you get, dearie?"

Cassy sat down. Her previous ruminations returned. Escorting them was a vision of a baronial castle. In the hall, a guest-book in which you wrote your name. A squad of lackeys that showed you into a suite of salons. Rugs on which there was peace; sofas on which there was ease; *étagères* on which there were reveries. Nothing else. No cupboards hung with confections. No models sailing in and out. Nothing so commercial as anything for sale. Nothing but patrician repose and the *châtelaine*—a duchess disguised as a dressmaker—who might, or might not, ask you upstairs.

In war time at that! Though, it is true, Congress had only just declared it.

But, Cassy reflected, two hundred and fifty, with Lennox deducted and less ten per cent, would not take her as far as the drawbridge. The fleeting vision of the castle passed, replaced by the bargain seductions of department-stores.

Fingering the money, she said: "Where does this person live? She ought to send a taxi."

"Certamente," replied the fat woman, lapsing, as she occasionally did lapse, into the easy Italian of the lyric stage. "She certainly will."

Cassy jumped up. "Well, then, you come along while I take a look about. Afterward we will have lunch. I'll eat, you can watch me and I'll tell you how it tastes. There's the telephone!"

Cassy opened the door, went out into the narrow and shadowy hall and took the receiver.

"Yes? Oh! None the better for the asking. Tonight? Impossible. To-morrow? Perhaps. Good-bye."

"Who was that?" the noble marquis called from the room beyond.

"An imbecile who wants me to dine and go to the opera."

"Not that Paliser?"

Cassy, poking her head in at him, threw him a kiss and returned to the Tamburini with whom, a little later, she was praying among the worshippers that thread the sacred and silent way where Broadway and Sixth Avenue meet.

In an adjacent basilica, the atmosphere charged with pious emanations, with envy, malice, greed and all other charitableness, choked the girl. But at last the holy rites were ended. To the voluntary of \$109.99, she passed into the peace of Herald Square where the ex-diva swayed, stopped and holding her umbrella as one holds a guitar, looked hopelessly and helplessly about.

"You're not preparing to serenade the Elevated?" Cassy bawled in her ear.

In the slam-bang of trains and the metallic howls of surface cars that herded and volplaned about them, the fat lady, now apparently gone mad, was gesticulating insanely. Yet she was but indicating, or trying to indicate, the relative refuge of a side street in which there was a cook-shop.

Then, presently, after all the dangers that may be avoided in remaining at home, and supplied with such delights as clam fritters offer, she savorously remarked: "I hope I am not going to be sick."

The charm of scented streets, the sedatives of shopping, the joy of lightsome fritters, these things, combined with the job, the unearned cheque and the fear of losing both, made her ghastly.

Cassy, devoid of pity, said: "Have some beer."

The Tamburini gulped. "I couldn't talk to you this morning and I've got to. It's for your own good, dearie; it is, so help me! Supposing he is a jackanapes. What do you want? A prize-fighter? Take it from me, whether he is one or the other, in no time it will be quite the same."

Cassy's lips curled. "Croyez-moi car j'ai passé par là." But, in mocking the woman, she frowned. "What business is it of yours?"

The fallen star gulped again. Conscious that she had struck the wrong note, she struck another. "Your papa is no better, is he? Between you and me and the bedpost, I doubt if he ever will be. I doubt if he plays again. You'll have to look after him. How're you going to? You can't expect to sing every night to the tune of two hundred and fifty. Not with war marching in on us. Not with everybody hard up."

Cassy had been about to order a chocolate éclair. The new note stayed her. But though new, it was not

novel. She had heard it before. It rang true. Absently she shoved at her plate.

In theory she knew her way about. The migratory systems of domestic experience said nothing to her, nor, thus far, had the charts of matrimony either. In the sphere of life to which a walk-up leads, the charts were dotted with but the postman and the corner druggist. Men and plenty of them she had met, but they too said nothing and not at all because they were dumb, but because, as the phrase is, they did not talk her language. But for every exception there is perhaps a rule. The one man who did speak her language, had held his tongue.

Now, as she shoved at her plate, she saw him, saw the tea-caddy, saw his rooms and saw too, as she left them, the girl to whom he was engaged. In the memory of that she lingered and looked down.

"Why, he could lead an orchestra of his own, your papa could."

Cassy looked up. She had been far away, too far, in a land where dreams do not come true. Impatiently she twisted. "What?"

"Didn't you hear me, dearie? I was talking about money—bushels of it."

About the bushels the woman rolled her tongue. They tasted better than the fritters.

A waiter approached. The room was long, dark, narrow, slovenly, spaced with tables on which were maculate cloths and lamps with faded shades. Greasily the waiter produced the bill.

"Bushels!" she appetisingly repeated.

Cassy paid. The waiter slouched away.

"You will drive through life in a hundred horse-

power car and be fined for speeding. The papers will say: 'Mrs. Pal——' "

"What did he pay you to tell me that?" Cassy exploded at her.

Unruffled by the shot, which was part and parcel of the job, and realising that any denial would only confirm what at most could be but a suspicion, the former diva fingered her pearls and assumed an air of innocence.

But already Cassy had covered her with her blotting-paper look. "As if I cared!"

"Dearie, he did pay me. He paid me the compliment of supposing that I take an interest in you. But he said nothing except what I said he said. He said if he got down on his knees you would turn your back on him."

"Then he is cleverer than he looks."

"Well, anyway, he is clever enough to have bushels of money and that is the greatest cleverness there is."

"In New York," retorted Cassy, who had never been anywhere else, physically at least, though mentally her little feet had trod the streets of Milan, the boards of the Scala.

"It can't be much different in Patagonia," replied this lady, who, to save her life, could not have told whether the land was Asiatic or African, nor who, to save her soul—if the latter were still salvable—could not have told that it was neither. "Besides," she added, "I was only thinking of your poor, dear papa."

Cassy said nothing. She stood up. She was making for the door and the charm of the scented streets.

Ma Tamby sighed, rose and followed. It was the devil's own job. Housebreaking must be easier!

XIV

CASSY'S department-store investments reached her the next day. Her father, who opened the door to them, fell back before the sum total of the C. O. D. With an arm in a sling, he could not hold the packages, much less pay for them, and he gasped as he called for aid.

The money that Cassy then produced seemed to him darkly mysterious and although he believed as firmly in her virtue, as, before the break, he had believed in the maestria of his own right hand, none the less, in addition to aid, he exacted light.

Cassy, dumping the packages on her bed, occupied herself in verifying the change which amounted to one cent. Then she sketched it.

His surprise fell away. The mythical catamount, the imaginary concert, the ponderable subsidy—two hundred and fifty, less ten per cent.—seemed to him natural and an unnatural world.

"And there's about ten dollars remaining," Cassy resumed. "Ten dollars and a penny. You can have the penny and I will keep the ten, or I'll keep the ten and you can have the penny."

That also seemed natural. But the addition or subtraction disclosed a deficit and he exclaimed at it. "You said two hundred and fifty!"

Cassy too saw the hole, but she could not lie out of it. "Well, I owed the difference."

In speaking she turned. Before her was a mirror in which she glanced at her hair that had been

superiorly tralala'd. She turned again, reflecting that Lennox must have already received the postal-order, which she had mailed the night before, and wondering whether he had liked her little scrawl of indignant thanks.

"I'll tell you about it later," she added. "Now I must get your dinner. How would you like a tenderloin, a salad, and a box of Camembert?"

He shuffled. "There is no Camembert any more." The tragedy of that seemed to overwhelm him. "I wish I were dead."

Cassy laughed. "Now it's the cheese. On Saturday it was the violin. Well, you got it back. What will you say if I find some Camembert? Do stop meowing. Any one might think you didn't have me."

At her young laughter, he groaned. "Formerly if I let a day go without practising, I noticed it. If I let two days go, Toscanini noticed it. Now it's weeks and weeks. It's killing me."

To cheer him, Cassy said gaily: "The artist never dies."

But it did not cheer him. Besides, though Cassy had laughed, there had been a tugging at her heart-strings. Shabby, unkempt, in a frayed dressing-gown, his arm in a dismal sling, he looked so out of it, so forlorn, so old.

He had shuffled away. She bit her lip. Later, when he had had his tenderloin and she had department-stored herself, a pint of grocer's burgundy had reduced him to tears.

The day before it had seemed to her that the frock would do. But her judgment had been hurried. Shops, crowds, the vibrations of both, devitalised and confused her. In choosing the frock she had not therefore given it the consideration which it perhaps

did not merit, and now her mirror shrieked it. The frock was not suited to her. Nothing was suited to her, except the produce of baronial halls, where the simplest thing exceeded the dreams of avarice, or else the harlequinades which she herself devised. None the less she would have liked to have had her father exclaim and tell her how smart she looked. He omitted it.

"Where are you going?"

"I told you. Dinner and the opera."

"Opera! There is no opera to-night. What do you mean? What did you tell me?"

On the table were dishes and the lamentable bottle. Cassy, in doubt whether to clear them then or later, hesitated. The hesitation he misconstrued.

"You told me nothing. You tell me nothing. I am kept in the dark."

Cassy, adjusting the wrap which she had left open that he might admire the unadmirable, moved to where he sat and touched him. "You're the silliest kind of a silly. I told you yesterday. Perhaps the opera was last night. But how could I go? Except that old black rag I had nothing to wear. If there is no opera to-night, there will be a concert or something. Don't you remember now? I was at the telephone."

He did remember, but apparently the recollection displeased. He growled. "Yes. It was that Paliser."

"Well, why not? If it had not been for him, I would not have got the catamount's money and you would not have had the burgundy."

But he was not to be mollified. The growl sharpened into a snarl. "Paliser! I don't like the breed. By God, if——"

The peradventure of that Cassy got before he could utter it. Paliser! Of all men! The absurdity con-

vulsed her. Her laughter ran up and down the scale.

"You're the dearest old duck of a goose I ever heard of." She turned. Her wrap swished. "I only wish you were going too."

Below, in the street, a man, precipitately vacating the box of a machine, touched his cap at her. "Beg pardon, mem. Miss Cara? Mr. Paliser's compliments and he's sent a car."

Cassy glanced at the man, who looked like a Roman emperor. From the man she turned to the car. Superiorly and soberly finished, it beckoned. Now, though, the Cæsar was holding open the door. Cassy got in. The emperor hopped up. The car leaped.

On the front seat was a box with her name on it. In it was a handful of orchids. The luxury of the car, the beauty of the demon-flowers, the flight from the walk-up, yet more, perhaps, the caresses and surrenders of spring, affected her. If, she thought, if only the things that might be could be the things that are! If only——

On the pale cushions she leaned back. Before her a curtain parted. In a wide, marble-flagged hall she was looking at a girl who was looking at her. A moment before he had said: "That is Miss Austen to whom I am engaged." A moment before she had seen her picture. The girl was good to look at, so good that, without further acquaintance, you knew she was good through and through. There was no mistaking that. But was she good enough? Was any girl good enough for him? And who was that with her? Probably her mother who probably too was the catamount's sister. They had a family likeness. Then at once the scene shifted. Cassy was in a room floored with thick rugs, hung with heavy draperies, and in that room the catamount had hired her to sing!

But the disgust of it passed. The curtain fell. Cassy turned to the window, through which a breath of lilac blew.

She sniffed and stared. Where was she? Where was the Riverside? Where, for that matter, was the roar of the glittering precinct in which the Splendor tossed its turrets to the sky? Here were dirty and reeling goblins; budding trees that bowed and fainted; a stretch of empty road that the scudding car devoured. Afar was a house that instantly approached and as suddenly vanished. Dimly beyond was another.

Cassy, leaning forward, poked at the emperor. "I will thank you to tell me where you are going. Don't you know where the Splendor is?"

Back at her he mumbled, but what she could not hear.

"Stop at once," she called.

Easily, without a quiver, almost within its own length, the car drew in and the Cæsar, touching his cap, was looking at her. "Beg pardon, mem. There was a note for you in the box. Mr. Paliser said——"

But now Cassy had it.

Chère demoiselle—though I do not know why I call you that, except that it sounds less perfunctory than dear Miss Cara, who, I hope will do me the honour of dining in the country, if for no better reason than because there is no opera to-night and I am her obedient servant.

M. P., JR.

Cassy looked up from it. "Country! He says country. What country? What does this mean?"

"The Place, mem. Paliser Place. It's not far now."

Cassy had not bargained for that. Stories of girls decoyed, drugged, spirited away, never heard of again,

sprang at her. Quite as quickly she dismissed them. But, being human, she had to find fault.

"You should have told me before. That will do. Drive on."

She sank back. The car leaped and she smiled. Paliser in the rôle of white-slaver! Her momentary alarm was now a mile behind her. But would they be alone? Though, after all, what did it matter? Yet in Harlem there was a broken old man who would not like it. And the basilica investments! If she had known she would have worn the black rag. But they would do for that tiresome Mrs. Beamish. As yet she had not decided what she would sing. The *Caro nome* occurred to her. Under her breath she began it and abruptly desisted. The *Dear Name* suggested another.

For it she substituted the *Ombra leggiera*. In its scatter of trills that mount, as birds mount, there were no evocations, though she did begin wondering again about Mrs. Beamish's music-room. If it were not too impossible she might give the *Ernani involame*. But at that and very unintentionally she thought of Lennox again.

She made a face and looked through the window. As usual she was hungry. The car now was bellowing through opening gates which, as she looked back, a man in brown was closing. On either side was a high stone wall, but beyond, as she looked again, was an avenue bordered with trees and farther on a white house with projecting wings in which was a court, an entrance and, above and about the latter, a pillared perron.

From the entrance she could see a man in livery hastening. Behind him, a man in black appeared. The car stopped. The first man opened the door.

Cassy got out. The other man additionally assisted by looking on and moving aside. Cassy went into a hall where a young person who did not resemble the Belle Chocolatière but whose costume suggested her, diligently approached.

"Would madame care to go upstairs?"

No, madame would not. But Cassy, instinctively insolent to pretentionness, was very simple with the simple. "Thank you. Will you mind taking my wrap? Thank you again."

She looked about the hall. Before she could inventory it, here was another man. "A nice trick you played on me," Cassy threw at him. "I was half-way before I discovered it. The orchids reconciled me. Thank you for them. Who is here?"

Smiling, deferential, apparently modest, perfectly sent out in perfectly cut evening clothes, Paliser took her hand. "You are and, incidentally, I am."

Cassy withdrew her hand. "I suppose you think you are a host in yourself."

"Merely the most fortunate of mortals," replied Paliser, who could be eighteenth-century when he liked, but who seldom bothered to keep it up.

Already he had been doing a little inventorying on his own account. The basilica frock did not say much and what it did say was not to his taste. The Sunday night fantasy he much preferred. It was rowdy, but it was artistic. But beauty may be dishonoured, it cannot be vulgarised. Even in pseudo-Parisianisms Cassy was a gem. A doubt though, one that had already visited him, returned. Was the game worth the possible scandal?

But now Cassy was getting back at him. "To stand about with the most fortunate of mortals ought

to be a shape of bliss. As it happens, I would rather sit."

"Naturally. Only, worse luck, there is no throne."

Cassy gave it to him again: "There is a court fool, though. Where are your cap and bells?"

"Not on you at any rate."

He motioned and Cassy passed on into a room beyond which other rooms extended, each different, but all in the same key, a monotone attenuated by lustres and the atmosphere, infinitely relaxing, which wealth exhales.

Cassy's thin nostrils quivered. Since childhood, it was her first breath of anything similar. It appeased and disarmed this anarchist who was also an autocrat.

"Will you sit here?"

Paliser was drawing a chair. The table before it lacked the adjacent severity. On it were dishes of Sèvres and of gold. Adjacently were three men. Their faces were white and sensual. They moved as forms move in a dream.

The stories of girls decoyed, spirited away, never heard of again, returned to Cassy. She had put the orchids beside her. Her flexible mouth framed a smile.

"You know, for a moment, I had the rare emotion of feeling and fearing that I was being eloped with."

A pop interrupted. She turned to a man at her elbow. "Only half a glass, please, and fill it with water." She returned to Paliser, who was opposite. "I had been thinking of something. I had not noticed where the car was going; and all of a sudden, I found myself I did not know where. Then, houp! It got me."

Paliser helped himself to a clam. "The charm of elopements passed with the post-chaise. Then they

had the dignity of danger and pistol shots through the windows. Nowadays you go off in a Pullman and return as prosaic as you started."

"Sometimes even more so," Cassy put in.

Paliser helped himself to another clam. "You speak feelingly and that is only right. This is a very important matter. It is a shame that romance should have passed with the post-chaise. Why should it not revisit us in the motor?"

Cassy sipped and considered it. "There ought to be a law on the subject."

"There is one. You may be summoned for speeding and get your name in the papers."

"Then the dignity of danger remains."

"But not in clams. Aren't you going to eat any?"

Cassy laughed. "I had some yesterday with Ma Tamby. They did not seem to agree with her. She became very noisy about a Mrs. Beamish. Who is she?"

"Mrs. Beamish?" Paliser repeated. He also had forgotten. But, with a click, memory raised a latch. From behind it the lady emerged. "Oh, she's a cousin of mine."

"Rather distant, I should fancy," said Cassy, who was conscious of the delay, though not of the click. The delay she had noticed without, however, divining the cause. But how could she possibly imagine that Mrs. Beamish had been evolved for the sole purpose of providing her with basilica opportunities? Yet the fault, if fault there were, resided in her education. She had never read Eliphaz Levi. She did not know that genii can be evoked.

"Well, she is more my sister's cousin than mine," Paliser anxious to get out of it, threw in. "I mean my sister has a more cousinly nature."

"I did not know you had a sister," said Cassy, who not only did not know but did not care. "Though, come to think of it, a sister with a cousinly nature must be so gratifying. Another distant relative, isn't she?"

"Very. She is in Petrograd."

That too was evocative. Cassy began talking about the biggest cropper that history has beheld—a tsar tossed from the saddle to Siberia!

Paliser, glad to be rid of Mrs. Beamish, took it up. The sordid story of the Russian chief of staff, bought by Hindenburg and shot by the Grand-Duke Nicholas, whom the tsar then exiled, was told once more.

"What else could you expect of that Hun?" Paliser concluded.

"A Hun!" Cassy exclaimed. "Why he is a Romanov."

"No more than you are," Paliser replied. "The last of the Romanovs married Catherine the Greater. There the breed ended. Paul, who followed and who married a German drab, was Catherine's son but not her husband's. The rest of the litter, down to the father of the recent incumbent, all married German drabs. The father of the ex-tsar married a Dane. The fellow is therefore one-eighth Dane and seven-eighths Hun. Totally apart from which, a grocer who knew his business would not have had him for clerk. His family knew that and, before he had time to be tsar, tried to poison him. To the misfortune, not of Russia merely, but of Christendom, they failed. If they had succeeded the eastern front would be secure. As for his wife, I saw her once. It was in the Winter Palace which, before it was sacked, was a palace. Since the palace of the Caliphs of Cordova crumbled,

there has never been a palace like it. It outshone them all. Well, that woman tarnished it."

Meanwhile dishes were brought and removed by servants, wooden-faced, yet with ears alert. The subject of elopements had seemed promising, but it led to nothing. At their own table, talk was gayer.

Cassy enjoyed the food, the diluted wine, Paliser's facile touch. He appeared to know a lot and she surprised herself by so telling him. "I wish I did," she added. "I am ignorant as a carp."

"You know how to charm," he replied. But, seeing her stiffen, he resumed, "With your voice. That is enough. It would be a mistake for you to be versatile. Versatility is for the amateur. The artist is a flower, never a bouquet."

It was decently said. In the decency of it, the agreeable insult which a compliment usually is was so chastened that Cassy flushed and felt that she had. It annoyed her, and she attributed it to the wine.

It was not the wine. Other influences were at work on this girl, born to a forsaken purple and whose soul was homesick for it. But purple is perhaps picturesque. It was not that for which her soul sighed, but the dream that hides behind it, the dream of going about and giving money away. To her the dream had been the dream of a dream, realisable only on the top rungs of the operatic ladder, which, later, she felt she was not destined to scale. None the less there are dreams that do come true, though usually, beforehand, there is a desert to cross.

"I wonder if I might have a cavatina?" Paliser asked, rising and moving to her.

Cassy shrugged. I have to pay for my dinner, she thought, but she too got up.

Preceding her, he led the way to a room of which

the floor, inlaid and waxed, was rugless. The windows were not curtained, they were shuttered. In the centre was a grand and a bench. Afar, at the other end, masking a door, was a portière, the colour of hyacinth. Near it, were two unupholstered chairs; one, white; the other, black. Save for these, save too for a succession of mirrors and of lights, the room was bare. In addition, it was spacious, a long oblong, ceiled high with light frescoes, the proper aviary for a song-bird.

Cassy curtsied to it. At table she had not wanted to sing. The mere sight of this room inspired.

Paliser opened the piano and, seating himself, ran his long thin fingers over the keys. He was heating them, preluding a score, passing from it to another. Presently he looked up; she nodded and the *Ah, non giunge* floated from her.

"Brava!" Paliser muttered as the final trill drifted away. Again he looked up. "You will be a very great artist."

He did not mean it. He judged her voice colourful but lacking in carriage.

Cassy, leaning forward, struck the keys, giving him the note and again she sang, this time the *Libiamo*, which, old as the hills, claptrap, utterly detestable, none the less served to display the bravura quality of her voice.

When it passed, Paliser sprang up, faced her. "Open your mouth! There! Wide!"

Cassy, familiar with the ritual, obeyed. Paliser peered into the strawberry of her throat. It was deep as a well and he moved back.

"You have the organ but you do not know how to use it. You don't know how to breathe."

Cassy forgot that he was young, that she was, that in the great room in the great house they were alone.

Through the shutters came the smell of lilacs, the sorceries of spring. In the sexlessness of art these things were unnoticed. For the first time she liked him. It was his frankness that drew her, though if he had been a frank old woman she would have liked him as well.

"My father says that. He says it is Ma Tamby's fault. He can't bear her."

For a while they discussed it. Paliser maintaining that were it not for the war she ought to go to Paris and Cassy asserting, though without conviction, that the specialty of the Conservatoire consisted in dried fruit.

Finally she said: "It must be late. I have a wrap somewhere and oh! my orchids."

The young person was summoned. The wrap was recovered, the orchids reappeared.

Paliser, helping Cassy with the wrap, said: "Shall I see it here again?" He knew he would but he thought it civil to ask.

Cassy too had her thoughts. The freedom with which, during the ham-and-eggs episode, his eyes had investigated her, where was it? On Sunday he had bored her to tears. That also had gone. During the past hour or two he had shown himself reasonably intelligent, unpresuming, without offensiveness of any kind. With a movement of the hand she lifted the wrap at her neck. "Here?"

It occurred to her that she did not know where the polished and inlaid floor on which she stood was located. Nor did she particularly care. Besides if her geography were vague, the floor was pleasant, a bit slippery perhaps, though just how slippery she was yet to learn.

"Yes. The day after to-morrow. Why not? I would like to run over a score or two with you."

"Good heavens! You are not composing an opera, are you?"

Paliser laughed. "I want to lead you away from painted mush into the arms of——"

"Not Strauss?" Cassy interrupted. "Art does not recognise frontiers but the Huns do not either and I will not recognise a Hun. Is the car at the door?"

He saw her out and away, and reentering the house went to a room in the wing. It was lined with book-cases that you did not have to break your back to examine. They began four feet from the floor and ended two feet higher. The room contained other objects of interest.

From among the latter, Paliser helped himself to a brandy and soda. It had been dry work. The drink refreshed him. It stimulated too. Also it suggested. He put the glass down and lightly swore at it.

"Damn Benny! He has only one thumb."

For a moment he eyed the glass. Then taking from a shelf Gautier's very spiritual account of the de Maupin, he eyed that. Not for long though. He put it back. He did not want to read. He did not want to drink. There were several things that he did not want. In particular he did not want to be alone.

He rang, ordered out a car and went sailing in town, to a brownstone front where you could lose as much money as you liked and not in solitude either. On the way, the thought of the damned and thumbless Benny accompanied him.

XV

THROUGH the inflated proprieties of social New York, Paliser's father had driven four-in-hand, and at a pace so klinking that social New York cut him dead. A lot he cared! The high-steppers in their showy harness flung along as brazenly as before. He did not care. He had learned to since. Age is instructive. It teaches that though a man defy the world, he cannot ignore it. But tastes are inheritable. Monty Paliser came in for a few, but not for the four-in-hand. Less vigorous than his father, though perhaps more subtle, he preferred the tandem.

In preparation for one that he had in view, he looked in, not at a mart, but at a shrine.

It was on the afternoon succeeding Cassy's visit to his slippery floor. The day was radiant, a day not of spring, or of summer, but of both. Above was a sky of silk wadded with films of white cotton. From below there ascended a metallic roar, an odour of gasoline—the litanies and incense of the temple, Semitic and Lampsacene, that New York long since became.

Lampsacus worshipped a very great god and worshipped him uniquely. New York, more devout and less narrow, has worshipped him also and has knelt too to a god almost as great. Their combined rituals have exalted the temple into a department-store where the pilgrim obtains anything he can pay for, which is

certainly a privilege. Youth, beauty, virtue, even smiles, even graciousness, Priapus and Mammon bestow on the faithful that garland the altars with cash.

In Park Avenue, on this radiant afternoon, Mrs. Austen and Paliser were occupied with their devotions. Mrs. Austen was priestess and Paliser was saying his prayers; that is, he was jingling his money, not audibly, but none the less potently in the lady's uplifted eyes.

"Yes," said the lady, who as usual did not mean it. "It is too bad. Margaret, the dear child, is so inexperienced that I feel that I must blame myself. I have kept from her—how shall I put it? Well, everything, and when she learned about this, I could not tell her that it was all very usual. It would have offended her modesty too much."

Pausing, Mrs. Austen smiled her temple smile. "I could not tell her, as somebody expressed it, that actresses happen in the best of families, but I left her to decide whether she cared to have them happen in her *ménage*."

The priestess, looking to the north and south, resumed: "It might have been different if she had been older, more experienced and had really cared for him. But how could she care? The child's nature is dormant. She does not know what love is. He is very nice, I have not a word to say against him, not one, but a lamp-post would be quite as capable of arousing her affection. She accepted him, I grant you that and you may well ask why. I know I asked myself the same thing, until I remembered that Mr. Austen offered to take me to Niagara Falls and I married him just to go there. At the time I was a mere chit and Margaret is little more. Now, I am not, I hope, censorious and I do not say that she had a lucky escape,

but I can say she thinks so. It was such a relief that it gave her neuralgia. But the child will be up and about in no time and then you must come and dine. You got my note?"

Paliser stifled a yawn. The priestess was, he knew, entirely willing to deliver whatever he wanted at temple rates. But he knew, too, there were forms and ceremonies to be observed. Being bored was one of them.

At another portal he has been obliged to go through the forms with Carlotta Tamburini. She also had wearied him, though less infernally than Mrs. Austen, and of the two he preferred her. The ex-diva was certainly canaille, but her paw was open and ready, whereas this woman's palm, while quite as itching, was delicately withheld. Their gods were identical. It was the shrines that differed. The one at which the Tamburini presided was plain as a pikestaff. The Austen's was bedecked like a girl on her wedding-day. Behind each Priapus leered. Above both was the shining face of Mammon.

In the present rites, that which wearied Paliser was the recital of the reason of the broken engagement. It was broken, that was the end of it, an end which, in ordinary circumstances, he would have regretted. Ordinarily it would have made the running too easy. The hurdles were gone. There were no sticks, no fences. It would not even have been a race, just a canter. The goal remained but the sporting chance of beating Lennox to it would have departed. That is the manner in which ordinarily he would have regarded it. But the war, that was to change us all, already had changed his views. The draft act had not then been passed, yet it was realised that some such

act would be passed, and generally it was assumed that among the exempt would be men with wives dependent on them and cogently he had reflected that if he married that would be his case precisely. At the same time he could not take a possible bride by the scruff of the neck and drag her off to a clergyman. Though it be to save your hide, such things are not done. Even in war-time there are wearisome preliminaries and these preliminaries, which a broken engagement abridged, the neuralgia of a possible bride prolonged. That was distinctly annoying and a moment later, when he had the chance, he vented the annoyance on Lennox.

"You got my note?" Mrs. Austen was asking.

"Yes," he replied, "and I will come with pleasure. Meanwhile, if my sympathy is not indiscreet, please convey it to your daughter." The kick followed. "Though, to be sure, Lennox is a loose fish."

"He is?" Mrs. Austen unguardedly exclaimed. Not for a moment had she suspected it and, in her surprise, her esteem for him jumped. Good heavens! she thought. How I have maligned him!

In the exclamation and the expression which her eyes took on, Paliser divined some mental somersault, divined too that behind it was something obscure, something that she was keeping back. Warily he backed.

"Oh, as for that, loose fish may mean anything. It is a term that has been applied to me and I dare say very correctly. If I did not live like a monk, I should be jailed for my sins."

He is his father all over again, Mrs. Austen cheerfully reflected and absently asked: "How is he?"

"Lennox? I haven't an idea."

"I mean your father."

"In a great hurry, thank you. The war has gone to his head."

"At his age? Surely——"

"He wants me to go," said Paliser, who had no intention of it whatever and whom subsequent events completely exempted. "He is in a hurry for me to enlist and in a greater hurry to have me marry."

Austerely, this pleasant woman grabbed it. "It is your duty!"

That was too much for Paliser, who, knowing as well as she did what she was driving at, wanted to laugh. Like the yawn, he suppressed it.

The priestess's austerity faded. A very fair mimic of exaltation replaced it. "Whoever she is, how proud she will be! A war-bride!"

But Paliser, who had his fill, was rising and, abandoning histrionics, she resumed: "The 24th at eight; don't forget!" Then as he passed from the portal, the priestess lifted her hands. "What a fish! Fast or loose, what a fish!"

Above her Mammon glowed, behind her leered Priapus.

Through the sunny streets, Paliser drove to the Athenæum, where everybody was talking war. The general consensus of ignorance was quite normal.

Lennox, seated with Jones at a window, was summarising his own point of view. "In a day or two I shall run down to Mineola. Perhaps they will take me on at the aviation field. Anyway I can try."

Jones crossed himself. He is signing his death-warrant, he thought. But he said: "Take you, Icarus. They will fly away with you. You will become a cavalier of the clouds, a toreador of the aerial

arena, an archangel soaring among the Eolian melodies of shrapnel. I envy, I applaud, but I cannot emulate. The upper circles are reserved for youth and over musty tomes I have squandered mine. I am thirty-two by the clock and I should hie me to the grave-digger that he may take my measure. And yet if I could—if I could!—I would like to be one of the liaison chaps and fall if I must in a shroud of white swords.”

Sombrely Lennox considered his friend. “Your shroud of white swords is ridiculous.”

Jones agreed with him. To change the subject, he rattled a paper. “Have you seen this? There is an account here of a man who shot his girl. He thought her untrue. Probably she was.”

“Reason enough then,” said Lennox, who latterly had become very murderous.

“I wonder! Anyway, though the paper does not say so, that was not his reason. The poor devil killed her not because she had been untrue, but because he loved her. He killed the thing he loved the best out of sheer affection. Unfortunately, for his virtues, he loved her innocently, ignorantly, as most men do love, without any idea that the one affection worth giving is a love that nothing can alter, a love that can not only forgive but console.”

“Is that what you call originality?” Lennox severely enquired. “If so, I have never run across any of it in your books.”

“Heaven forbid that you should, dear boy. I live by the sweat of my pen. Originality never has, and never will make a best-seller.”

It was while Jones was airing these platitudes that Paliser entered the room. He approached the two

men. Lennox at once got up, turned his back, marched away.

A few days later, Jones, in reviewing the incident, wondered whether Lennox could, even then, have suspected. But, at the moment, in apology for him, he merely lied.

"I frightened him off with shop-talk."

Paliser took the vacant seat. "What are you writing?"

"Cheques. There is nothing simpler and, except cash, nothing so easily understood. To keep my hand in I will write one now."

Then Jones too got up. Paliser, to whom solitude was always irksome, found himself alone. But his solitude was not prolonged. A man joined him. Another followed. Presently there was a group.

From the table where Jones had gone, the inkbeast saw and seeing thought: Empires may totter, nations fall. The face of the earth will be changed. But the toady endureth forever.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was another perfect day, a forenoon after Veronese, a day of which the charm was heightened by the witcheries that Harlem knows—the shouted temptations of push-carts; the pastimes of children, so noisy, so dirty, so dear! the engaging conversation of German ladies; the ambient odour of cabbage and the household linen fluttering gaily on the roofs. It was rapturous. Just beyond was a sewer—the Hudson. But above was the turquoise of the mid-April day.

Cassy went by and on, turned a corner, crossed the street, descended into a cave, smiled sweetly at a man who was closing a door and who, seeing that smile, smiled at it, smiled wantonly, held the door open, yet, noting then but an arid blankness where her smile had been, banged the door and shouted fiercely: "Hundred-thirty-seven-street-next."

The train crashed on. Cassy, her nose in the air, assumed a barbed-wire attitude, her usual defensive against the conjecturing eyes of old men and the Hello, Kid! glances of New York's subtle youth. This attitude, which enabled her to ignore everything and everybody, enabled her also to think of what she liked, or of what she did not like, a circumstance that happened to her then and which was induced by her father.

That day he had been terrible. The tragedies of the fated Atrides, what were they to his? A lamentation longer than Jeremiah's followed. His arm, his

skill, his art, his strength, his money, everything, for all he knew even his daughter, was taken from him. How long, O Lord, how long! And presto! da capo, all over and afresh she had it.

Then, shaking a finger, he cried: "Where were you last night?"

Cassy, reduced to tears, exclaimed at him. "Why here. Where else?"

Darkly he eyed her. "Yes, but earlier, before you came in, where were you?"

Cassy could not help it, she shook. A moment before she had been crying whole-heartedly, associating herself, as a daughter may, in her father's woe. But that was too much. With the tears still in her eyes, she laughed. "Gracious goodness! You don't take me for a fly-by-night?"

The noble marquis, who had been standing, sat down. Before him, on the ginger of the wall, hung the portrait of the gorgeous swashbuckler. Behind the latter were portraits, dim, remote, visionary, of other progenitors who probably never existed. But he was convinced that they had, convinced that always, sword in hand, they had upheld the honour of the Casa-Evora. No, surely, his daughter had not forfeited that. No, certainly, he did not suspect her. But there was much that he did not understand. The misery of the mystery of things overcame him. He wept noisily.

Cassy, who had been seated, stood up. She had on her rowdy frock. She also had on a hat—if you can call a tam-o'-shanter a hat. Therewith were white gloves which she had got at the basilica and which as yet were free from benzine. Her father had distressed her inhumanly, but she had survived it, as youth sur-

vives anything, and she looked then, not tear-stained in the least, but, as usual, very handsome.

Bending forward, she touched him. "There, you dear old thing, don't take on so. I have been planning something fat for you. Everything will come out right. Just wait and see—and when you're hungry, there's some nice cold veal in the kitchy."

But though in the kitchen there was cold veal, which it were perhaps poetic to describe as nice, yet even the poetry of that was exceeded by the poetry of the plan. Cassy had planned nothing lean or fat, nothing whatever. She had spoken as a little mother may, in an effort to console, though perhaps prompted subconsciously by the inscrutable possibilities of life. Anything may happen. Already on the stage of which destiny is the scene-shifter, the fates, in their eternal rôle of call-boy, were summoning the actors to the drama in which the leading rôle was hers and on which the curtain was about to rise.

Her father, comforted by the imaginary, looked up. She had gone. From the sling he took his arm. The elbow was stiff, though less stiff than it had been. Moreover the wrist moved readily and the fingers were as flexible as before. Consoled by that, comforted already, he shuffled into the kitchen and consumed the cold veal.

Now, in the crashing car, Cassy's thoughts went forward and back. Her father's question, that had succeeded in being both pointed and pointless, returned. She smiled at it. It would take another Don Juan than Mozart's to entice me, she serenely reflected. Yet, after all, would he have to be so remarkable? At any rate he would have to be fancy free and not en-

gaged as was a certain person who had not so much as said Boo!

Cassy coloured. Always corsetless, she was not straight-laced. Given the attraction and with it the incentive, and that tam-o'-shanter might have gone flying over the windmill. The tam was very safe. There was no incentive and, though there was no moral corset either, she was temperamentally unable to go poaching on another's preserves. Barring the chimerical, that any girl may consider and most girls do, she was straight as a string. A shabby old man had no need to ask.

"Seventy-second!" The trainman bawled unmolli-fably at her.

Cassy left a certain person there. Into her thoughts another man had hopped. She surveyed him. He was good-looking. He was rich. These attributes said nothing. A beautiful male—always an anomaly—never attracts a beautiful woman. That other anomaly, a man of inherited wealth, is disgusting to the anarchist. Cassy was a beauty and an anarchist. She was also an aristocrat. The tattered portières of the House of Casa-Evora, the bedrabbled robes of the marquissate, all that was ridiculous to her. She was an aristocrat none the less. She had a high disdain for low things. In the kitchen, which she called the kitchy, she bent her back but not her head. Her head was unbowed. She sullied her hands but not her conscience. A dirty act she could not perform. Aristocrat and anarchist, she was also an artist. With simple things and simple people, she was simple as you please. Stupidity and pretentiousness enraged her. The philistine and the ignoble she loathed.

Now, through the windows of her soul, she sur-

veyed him. His looks, his money, said nothing. On the other hand there was about him an aroma that appealed. The aroma was not the odour that local society exhales. At that Cassy's nose was in the air. A lot of nobodies occupied with nothing—and talking about it! Such was her opinion of the gilded gang, an opinion which Paliser—to do him the justice that the historian should—would have had put to music and arranged for trumpets. It was not that, therefore. The aroma was more fetching. The man talked her language, liked what she liked, never presumed. In considering these factors, she considered her gloves. Thank God, they did not smell of benzine!

“Grand Central!”

Cassy, abandoning Paliser there, went on to Fifth Avenue, where, with the protection of cross-town traffic, she attempted to get to the other side. But halfway, she saw, or thought she saw, the young woman to whom a certain person was engaged. She turned to look, backed into the traffic-sign and put it in motion. Instantly motors were careering at each other. Instantly a purple policeman grown suddenly black, was smitten with St. Vitus.

Dancing and bellowing as he danced, he righted the sign and swore at Cassy, who, for added outrage, had flung herself at him and was smiling sweetly in his swollen face. About them the torrent poured. Then all at once, in a riot that afterwards seemed to her phantasmagoric, the policeman raised a forefinger in salute. From the maelstrom she was hoisted bodily into a car. Somebody, the policeman probably, was boosting her from behind. Never had she suffered

such indignities! To accentuate them, somebody else was shouting in her face.

"I've saved your life, you'll have to marry me."

"Well, I declare!" Cassy, horribly ruffled, exclaimed at Paliser, who had the impudence to laugh. She smoothed the smock, patted the hat, passed a gloved hand over her nose.

"You're all there," Paliser, amused by the mimic, was telling her. "What is more, one pick-me-up deserves another."

With his stick, he poked at the mechanician, gestured with it, indicating a harbour.

The car veered and stopped at a restaurant that had formerly resided in Fourteenth Street, but which had moved, as the heart of Manhattan moved, and was then thinking of moving again.

In the entrance were Cantillon and Ogston, agreeable young men, who stood aside for Cassy, raised their hats at Paliser, nudging each other with unfathomable good-fellowship.

"A peach!"

"No, a pair!"

Their pleasantries were lost. Cassy and Paliser moved on and in to the Fifth Avenue room, crowded as usual on this high noon. But what are head-waiters for? Promptly there was a table, one not too near the orchestra and yet which gave on the street.

"What would you dislike the least?" Paliser from over a bill-of-fare inquired. He had brought his hat and stick with him and, in spite of a waiter's best efforts, had put both on the floor.

I am not fit to be seen, thought Cassy, looking about at two and three hundred dollar frocks and at blouses that were almost as cheap.

Paliser, turning to the waiter, translated passages from the menu. "Surprised tomatoes, cocottish eggs, suprême on a sofa, ice Aurora Borealis. And a baked potato." He turned to Cassy. "Barring the ice, a baked potato is the only thing in which they can't stick grease."

"Et comme vin, monsieur?" enquired the waiter who ought to have been at the front.

"Aqua pura. But probably you have not got it. Celestial Vichy, then." He looked again at Cassy. "What else might displease your ladyship?"

"Do stop talking like a low comedian," Cassy vexatiously retorted. "If you had not used force I would not be here. I could not make a row at the door."

"No, one scene on Fifth Avenue is enough for one day."

"I should say so and it was you who made it. I was going quietly about my business when I was derickied into your car."

"Not at all. You threw yourself at my head. If it had not been for me, the policeman would have marched you off to prison."

Cassy laughed. "The dear man! He knew I would be worse off with you."

"Yes. He was certainly perspicacious. Where did you say you were going?"

Cassy removed her gloves. "Before I was attacked? To a music-shop. There is a song I want to get for Mrs. Thingumagig's, Mrs. Beamish——"

"Mrs. Who?" Paliser asked. Again he had forgotten the lady. But from one of memory's pantries her wraith peered out. "Ah, yes, of course! Well, we can stop by for it and you can run it over in the

country to-night. You remember that you are to dine with me, don't you?"

Cassy lifted a lip as a dog does when about to bite. "Remember it, I have thought of nothing else."

But now the waiter put a dish between them and Paliser said: "You make me feel like this surprised tomato."

Then came the bite. "While you are about it, you can feel like both of them. I am not going."

Argument weakens everything and wearies everybody—except the young. The mouths of youth are naturally full of objections and insults. Were it otherwise, young people would be too servile to the past, too respectful to the present and the future would not know them as guides.

Paliser, young in years, but old at heart, omitted to argue. He did what is perhaps superior, he changed the subject. "What is this song you were speaking of? Why not try that thing of Rimsky-Korsakov, the 'Chanson Hindoue'?"

Then, throughout that course and the courses that followed, peace descended upon them. Even to talk music soothes the savage breast. It soothed Cassy and to such an extent that, finally, when the ice came she made no bones about admitting it was her favourite dish.

"Du café, monsieur? Des liqueurs?" the slacker asked.

But no, Paliser did not wish anything else, nor did Cassy. The ice sufficed. She ate it slowly, a little forkful at a time, wishing that her father could share it, wishing that he, too, could have sofa'd suprêmes and some one to pay for them. She raised her napkin.

Paliser lit a cigarette and said: "You made no reply to that statement of mine."

She stared. "What statement?"

"About saving your life."

"And ruining my reputation?"

"Well, life comes first. I said you would have to marry me to pay for it. Will you?"

Cassy lowered the napkin. He was talking in jest she knew, or thought she knew, but the subject was not to her taste, though if he had been serious she would have disliked it still more. She wanted to give it to him, but no fitting insolence occurred to her and she turned to the window before which two Japanese were passing, with the air, certainly feigned, which these Asiatics display, of being hilarious and naïf.

"Will you?" he repeated.

"Will I what?"

"Marry me?"

Perhaps he did mean it, she thought. He was cheeky enough for anything. But now he was prodding her. "Say yes. Say to-morrow; say to-day."

She turned on him. "Why not yesterday? Or is it just another of your pearls of thought? You are simply ridiculous."

Paliser put down his cigarette. "That is the proper note. Marriage is ridiculous. But it is the most ancient of human institutions. Divorce must have been invented at least three weeks later."

Cassy did not mean to laugh and did not want to, but she could not help herself and she exploded it. "You are so ardent!"

Innocently Paliser caressed his chin. He had made her laugh and that was a point gained. But such

pleasure as he may have experienced he succeeded in concealing.

"Again the proper note! I am ardent. Yet—shall I admit it?—formerly I walked in darkness. It is all due to my father. I have forgotten the prophet preaching on the hillside who denounced respectability as a low passion. But my father, while deeply religious, has views more advanced. He dotes on respectability. He tried to instil it into me and, alas! how vainly! I was as the blind, the light was withheld and continued to be until, well, until a miracle occurred. You appeared, I was healed, I saw and I saw but you. What do you say?"

"That your conversation is singularly edifying." In speaking, Cassy gathered her gloves with an air slightly hilarious but not in the least naïf. Before Paliser could cut in, she added: "If I don't hurry, Ma Tamby will be out and I shall lose my lesson."

Paliser shifted. She is devilish pretty, he thought. But is she worth it? For a second he considered the possible scandal which he had considered before.

He stood up. "Let me take you. We can stop for the song on the way."

XVIII

MY Carlottatralala! Dear Carlottatralala!"

Lightly at the door, Cassy strung the words to a mazourka. Her voice twisted, swung, danced into a trill that was captured by echoes that carried it diminishingly down the stairway of the mansion where Carlotta Tamburini lived.

"Eh?"

Partially the door opened. A fat slovenly woman showed an unpowdered nose, a loose unpainted mouth, and, at sight of Paliser, backed. "For God's sake! One moment, dearie. Straight ahead. With you in two shakes."

Cassy, her yellow frock swishing, led the way to a room furnished with heaped scores, with a piano, a bench, chairs and a portrait, on foot, of a star before the fall. Adjacent were framed programmes, the faded tokens of forgetless and forgotten nights, and, with them, the usual portraits of the usual royalties, but perhaps unusually signed. The ex-diva had attended to that herself.

Paliser, straddling the bench, put his hat on the piano and looked at Cassy, who had gone to the window. It was not the palaces opposite that she saw. Before her was a broken old man revamped. In his hand was a baton which he brandished demoniacally at an orchestra of his own. The house foamed with faces, shook with applause, and without, at the glow-

ing gates, a chariot carried him instantly to the serenities of elaborate peace.

"It won't take over an hour."

The vision vanished. Across the way, in a window opposite, a young man was dandling, twirling one side of a moustache, cocking a conquering eye. Cassy did not see him. Directly behind her another young man was talking. She did not hear.

On leaving the restaurant and, after it, the music-shop, the car had taken them into the Park where Paliser, alleging that he was out of matches, had handed her into another restaurant where more Vichy was put before her and, with it, that question.

The air was sweet with lilacs. On the green beyond Cassy could see them, could see, too, a squirrel there that had gone quite mad. It flew around and around, stopped suddenly short, chattered furiously and with a flaunt of the tail, disappeared up a tree.

"What a dear!" was Cassy's reply to that question.

But Paliser gave her all the rope that she wanted. He had no attraction for her, he knew it, and in view of other experiences, the fact interested him. It had the charm of novelty to this man who, though young, was old; who, perhaps, was born old; born, as some are, too old in a world too young.

He struck a match and watched the little blue-gold flame flare and subside. It may have seemed to him typical. Then he looked up.

"Frankly, I have no inducements to offer, and, by the same token, no lies. It would be untrue if I said I loved you. Love is not an emotion, it is a habit, one which it takes time to form. I have had no opportunity to acquire it, but I have acquired another. I

have formed the habit of admiring you. The task was not difficult. Is there anything in your glass?"

"A bit of cork, I think," said Cassy, who was holding the glass to the light and who was holding it moreover as though she had thoughts for nothing else.

But her thoughts were agile as that squirrel. A why not? Why not? Why not? was spinning in them, spinning around and around so quickly that it dizzied her. Then, like the squirrel, up a tree she flew. For herself, no. She did not want him, never had wanted him, never could.

"May I have it?" Paliser took the glass. Save for subsiding bubbles, and the bogus water, there was nothing there. "Will you take mine? I have not touched it."

Cassy took it from him, drank it, drank it all. Her thoughts raced on. She was aware of that, though with what they were racing she could not tell.

"I don't know why I am so thirsty."

Paliser knew. He knew that the taste of perplexity is very salt. She was considering it, he saw, and he payed out the rope.

"People who claim to be wise are imbeciles. But people who claim to be happy are in luck. I have no pretensions to wisdom but I can claim to be lucky if——"

Cassy, her steeple-chasing thoughts now out of hand, was saying something and he stopped.

"It is very despicable of me even to listen to you. I don't think I would have listened, if you had not been frank. But you have had the honesty not to pretend. I must be equally sincere. I——"

It was Paliser's turn. With a laugh he interrupted. "Don't. A little sincerity is a dangerous thing and a

great deal of it must be fatal. Besides I know it all by heart. I am the son of rich and disreputable people. That is not my fault, and, anyway, it is all one to you. But what you mean is that, should you consent, the consideration will not be—er—personal with me or—er—spiritual with you, but—er—just plain and simple materialism.”

Cassy looked wonderingly at him. It was surprising how quickly and how completely he had nailed it. But into the bewilderment there crept something else. “Yes, and I am ashamed to look myself in the face.”

Paliser gave a tug at the rope. “Then don’t do that either. Look at me. Matrimony is no child’s play. It is like a trip to England—close confinement with the chance of being torpedoed. Interference is the submarine that sinks good ships. If you consent, there is only one thing on which I shall insist, but I shall insist on it absolutely.”

Visibly the autocrat stiffened. “Shall you, indeed!”

Paliser pounded, or affected to pound, on the table. “Yes, absolutely.”

You may go to Flanders then, thought Cassy, but, with that look which she could summon and which was tolerably blighting, she said, “Ah! The drill sergeant!”

“Yes, and here is the goose-step. The drill sergeant orders that you must always have your own way in everything.”

Considerably relaxed by that, Cassy laughed. “You are very rigorous. But don’t you think it is rather beside the mark?”

“Beside it!” Paliser exclaimed. “It tops it, goes all over it, covers it, covers the grass, covers everything—except a fair field, a free rein and every favour.”

Cassy was gazing beyond where the squirrel had been. A limousine passed. A surviving victoria followed. Both were superior. So also were the occupants. They were very smart people. You could tell it from the way they looked. They had an air contemptuous and sullen. The world is not good enough for them, Cassy thought. In an hour, car and carriage would stop. The agreeable occupants would alight. They would enter fastidious homes. Costly costumes they would exchange for costumes that were costlier. They would sit at luxurious boards, lead the luxurious life and continue to, until they died of obesity of the mind.

None of that! Cassy decided. But already the picture was fading, replaced by another that showed a broken old man, without a penny to his name, or a hope save in her.

From the screen, she turned to Paliser, who, aware of her absence, had omitted to recall her. Now, though, that she again condescended to be present, he addressed her in his Oxford voice.

"But what was I saying? Yes, I remember, something that somebody said before me. Nowadays every one marries except a few stupid women and a few very wise men. Yet, then, as I told you, I have no pretensions to wisdom."

"Nor I to stupidity," Cassy thoughtlessly retorted. Yet at once, realising not merely the vanity of the boast but what was far worse, the construction that it invited, she tried to recall it, tangled her tongue, got suddenly red and turned away.

"You do me infinite honour then," said Paliser, who spoke better than he knew. But her visible discomfort delighted him. He saw that she wanted to wriggle

out of it and, like a true sportsman, he gave her an opening in which she would trip.

"Matrimony is temporary insanity with permanent results. You must not incur them blindfolded. Do me the favour to look this way. Before you sits a pauper."

In the surprise of that, Cassy did look and walked straight into it. "What?"

"Precisely." In sheer enjoyment he began lying frankly and freely. He lied because lying is a part of the game, because it is an agreeable pastime and because, too, if she swallowed it—and why shouldn't she?—it might put a spoke in such wheels as she might otherwise and subsequently set going.

"Precisely," he repeated. "It is different with my father. My father has what is called a regular income. One of these days I shall inherit it. It will keep us out of the poorhouse. But meanwhile I have only the pittance that he allows me."

Yes, Cassy sagaciously reflected. What with Paliser Place, its upkeep and the rest of it, it must be a pittance. But the lie behind it, which she mistook for honesty, tripped her as it was intended to do. A moment before she might have backed out. Now, in view of the lie that she thought was truth, how could she? It would be tantamount to acknowledging she was for sale but that he hadn't the price. Red already, at the potential shame of that she got redder.

Paliser, who saw everything, saw the heightening flush, knew what it meant, knew that he was landing her, but knew, too, that he must bear the honours modestly.

"Bread and cheese in a cottage and with you!" he exclaimed. "But, forgive me, I am becoming lyrical."

He turned, summoned the waiter, paid for the water, paid for the service and took from the man his stick.

Cassy went with him to the car. She had made no reply. If she were to take the plunge, there was no use shivering on the brink. But what would her father say? He would be furious of course, though how his fury would change into benedictions when he found himself transported from the walk-up, lifted from Harlem and cold veal! Presently there would be a flower in his button-hole and everything that went with the flower. Moreover, if the poor dear wanted to be absurd, she would let him parade his marquisate; while, as for herself, she would have to say good-bye to so much that had been so little. Good-bye! Addio per sempre! The phrase from *La Tosca* came to her. It told of kisses and caresses that she had never had. Yet, beneath her breath, she repeated it. Addio per sempre!

Then suddenly, without transition, she felt extraordinarily at peace with herself, with everybody, with everything. After all, she did not know, stranger things had happened, she might even learn to care for him and to care greatly. But whether she did or she did not, she would be true as steel—truer! He had been so nice about it! Yes, she might, particularly since she had made a clean breast of it and he knew she was marrying him for what it pleased him to describe as his pittance.

The car now was flying up the Riverside. An omnibus passed. From the roof, a country couple spotted the handsome girl and the handsome young man who were lolling back so sumptuously, and the lady stranger, pointing, said to her gentleman: "Vanderbilt folk, I guess, ain't they dandy!"

Behind the lady sat a novelist who was less enthusiastic. Another girl gone gay, was his mental comment. Well, why not? he reflected, for Jones' prejudices were few and far between. Besides, he added: *Les Portugais sont toujours gais*. But he had other things to think about and he dismissed the incident, which, in less than a week, he had occasion to recall.

Cassy, meanwhile, after serenading a fat woman's door and looking from a palatial window at the moving-pictures of her thoughts, at last heard Paliser, who, already, had twice addressed her.

"It won't take over an hour or so."

But now the Tamburini, ceremoniously attired in a wrapper, strode in and Paliser, who had been straddling the music-bench, stood up.

The fact that they had come together and were together, had already darkly enlightened the fallen star and as she strode in she exclaimed with poetry and fervour: "Two souls with but a single thought!"

Paliser took his hat. "We are a trifle better provided. I have as many as three or four thoughts and one of them concerns a license. I am going to get it."

His face was turned from Cassy and his eyes, which he had fastened on his hostess, held caveats, commands, rewards.

Massively she flung herself on Cassy. "Dearie, I weep for joy!"

Cassy shoved her away. "Not on me, Tamby."

But the dear lady, in attacking her, shot a glance at Paliser. It was very voluble.

Cassy, too, was looking at him. Her education had been thorough. She knew any number of useless things. In geography, history, and the multiplication-

table she was versed. But Kent's Commentaries, passionate as they are, were beyond her ken. The laws to which they relate were also. None the less, on the subject of one law she had an inkling, vague, unprecised, and, for all she knew to the contrary, incorrect. She blurted it. "Don't I have to go, too?"

Ma Tamby grabbed it. "Go where, dearie?"

"For the license?"

Ma Tamby tittered. "Not unless you love the song of the subway. The license is a man's job." Twisting, she giggled at Paliser. "But not hard labour, he, he!"

"A life-term, though," he answered and added: "I'll go at once."

That settled it for Cassy. A chair stretched its arms to her. She sat down.

Wildly the fat woman gesticulated. "Dearie, no! But how it gets me! As true as gospel I dreamed so much about it that it kept me awake. I do believe I have a pint of champy. Shall I fetch it? I must."

Coldly Cassy considered her. "Don't. You'll only get tight."

Paliser, making for the door, called back: "Save a drop for me."

"May the Lord forgive me," sighed the fat woman. "I was that flustered I forgot to congratulate him. But how it takes me back! Dearie, I too was young! I too have loved! Ah, gioventu primavera della vita! Ah, l'amore! Ah! Ah!"

"You make me sick," said Cassy.

"Dearie——"

"Be quiet. My father won't like it and I can't lie to him about it. But I shall need some things and you will have to go for them. What will you tell him?"

With one hand, the fat woman could have flattened Cassy's father out. But not his tongue. The nest of vipers there, even then hissed at her.

"Why, dearie, to-morrow you'll have your pick of Fifth Avenue and until then, if you need a tooth-brush, I'll get one for you around the corner."

"But my father will have to be told something. He'll worry to death. I might write though, and put on a special delivery. Look here. Have you any note paper that isn't rotten with scent? If not, I do believe I'll chuck it."

"For God's sake, dearie!"

Hastily, in search of scentless paper, the fat woman made off.

XIX

OVER the way, on the jimcrack of the stately mansion opposite, the westering sun had put an aigrette of gold. The young man with the conquering eye had gone. A lovely Jewess, leaning like a gargoyle, violently threatened some Ikey in the unlovely street below. Above was a pallid green. Beyond, across the river, the sun, poised on a hill-top, threw from its eternal palette shades of salmon and ochre that tinted an archipelago of slender clouds. But in the street was the music of carefree lads, playing baseball, exchanging chaste endearments. There too was the gaiety of little trulls, hasty and happy on their roller-skates. While perhaps to generalise these delights, a trundled organ tossed a ragtime. The charm was certainly affecting and that charm the horn of Paliser's approaching car merely increased.

Long since the letter had gone and, with it, another to Mrs. Yallum. In the former, Cassy had tried to gild the pill, yet without succeeding in disguising it.

Dear Daddy:

You are the best man in the world and the next best your little girl is to marry now, right away, and become Mrs. Monty Paliser. But my heart will be with you and so will Mrs. Yallum. Don't fuss with her, there's a dear, and take your medicine regularly and be ready to give me your blessing as soon as I can run in, which will be at the first possible moment, when I shall have

more news, good news, better news, best of daddies, for thee.

A whirlwind of kisses,

CASSY.

Adjacently, on the upper reaches of Broadway, Ma Tamby was shopping. The sun now, gone from the river, was painting other spheres. From a corner, shadows crept. They devoured the floor, absorbed the piano, assimilated the room. They left pits where they passed. They enveloped Cassy.

Suddenly, she shivered.

She had been far away, outside of the world, in a region to which the clamouring street could not mount. Her thoughts had lifted her to a land that had the colours, clear and yet capricious, of which dreams are made. There beauty stood, and truth with beauty, and so indistinguishably that the two were one. But truth, detaching herself, showed her candid face. The shadows elongating, reached up and darkened it. The candour remained, but the candour had become terrible. Cassy saw it. She saw that the land to which she had been lifted was the land of beauty and horror. It was then she shivered.

Instantly something touched her. There was no one. The land, the beauty, the horror had faded. No longer on the heights, she was in a trivial room in Harlem. She was awake. She was absolutely alone. None the less something that was nothing, something invisible, inaudible, intangible, imperceptible, something emanating from the depths where events crouch, prepared to pounce, had touched her. She knew it, she felt it. Her impulse was to scream, to rush away. But from what? It was all imaginary. Common-sense, that can be so traitorous, told her that. Then,

immediately, before the wireless from the unknown, which modern occultism calls the impact, could impel her, the room was invaded.

Ma Tamby, tramping in, switching on the lights, was exclaiming and gesticulating at her and at Paliser, who had followed and who was standing in the doorway.

"Dearie! For God's sake! The child's asleep! In all my born days I never knew the likes of that!"

Icily Cassy eyed her. "What have you there?"

"Where? What? This?" Feelingly the woman exhibited a nice, big package. "Why, the things I bought for you!"

"And do you for a moment suppose that I am going to carry a bundle?"

"Saints alive, child! Didn't you tell me——"

But now Paliser, in his cultured voice, intervened. "If I may have it?" He took it, moved to the window, leaned from it, called: "Mike! You see this? Then see too that you don't muff it."

The bundle vanished.

He turned to Cassy. "I telephoned to Dr. Grantly. He is a clergyman. It might seem uncivil to keep him waiting."

Cassy saw him at once—a starchy old man, with a white tie and little side whiskers, who lived—and would die—in a closed circle of thought.

Then again that nothing touched her, though, because of the others, more lightly, less surely. But it touched her. She was quite conscious of it, equally conscious that there was still time, that she could still desist, that she had only to say that she would not, that she had changed her mind and tell them no, right out and be hanged to them. On the strawberry of her tongue it trembled. At once before her there floated

another picture, the picture of a shabby old man, without a penny in the world, or a hope save in her.

She stood up.

"Dearie, dearie, I wish you joy, I do!" the fat woman sobbed, or appeared to sob, and everything being possible, it may be that she did not sob. *La joie fait peur*. She had done her part. On the morrow a cheque would reach her. "Dearie, dearie!"

"Don't be a fool," Cassy frigidly threw at her.

"Will you take my arm?" Paliser asked.

"Don't be a fool either," she threw at him and bravely, head up, went on to the events that waited.

In the street below a strain overtook her. Ma Tamby was amusing herself with "Lohengrin."

XX

PALISER, alighting, turned to help Cassy. But Cassy could get out unassisted.

The grave¹ crunched beneath the wheels of the retreating car. From afar came the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated. Otherwise the air was still, very sweet. The house too was silent. In the hall and in the windows there were lights, but there seemed to be nobody about and that and the quiet gave her the delicious impression that the house was enchanted. It was a very nonsensical impression, but it was the nonsense that made it delicious.

Paliser was saying something, though what she did not hear. The sky now was indigo and in it hung a yellow feather. On the Hudson it had been very pale, the ghost of a feather. But, as Harlem receded, it had ridden higher and brightened in the ride. Cassy had watched it, wishing that Paliser would not talk. He had sat next to her, on the same seat, yet if the portion of it which he occupied had been in a Queensland back-block, he could not have been farther from her heart. He took her hand and she let him. He kissed her and she submitted to that. But she wondered whether courtesans do not hate the men who pay them, more than they hate themselves. Was she any better? However a priest mumbled at her, she was selling herself. Love alone is marriage. She had none, nor had he. The whole thing was abominable, and, as he held her hand and pressed her lips, her

young soul rebelled. Even for her father's sake, this cup was too much.

Now though, the empty hall and the great silent house took on the atmosphere of the Palace of the White Cat. The cup became a philtre. The abomination changed into deliciousness. There are fairy-tales that are real. For all she knew, Paliser might change into Prince Charming and certainly he looked it.

He had been saying something, what she did not hear. But on the steps beneath the perron, she turned and saw that which previously she had not realised, he was extraordinarily good-looking, and about her closed a consciousness that her rowdy frock was a tissue of diamonds and that he was in doublet and hose.

A moment only. But during it something melted about her. Immediately aware of the phenomenon, she felt that she ought to freeze. She tried to and failed. The atmosphere of deliciousness prevented and, though she did not know the reason, she did know that she had failed and the fact instead of annoying, amused. Then, as she followed Paliser into the house, she told herself that she was an imbecile, that she did not know her own mind and, without transition, wondered how her father was taking it.

From the hall, they passed through a succession of rooms vacant, subdued, rich, and on into that other room where she had sung. At the farther end was a hyacinth curtain that masked a door. But near the entrance through which she had come was an ivory chair. Cassy, seating herself on it, wondered what had become of the bundle. She was sure that it held everything except what she wanted. Then suddenly behind her blue smock came a gnawing. She thought she

would ask Paliser to have somebody fetch her a sandwich, two sandwiches, or else some bread and butter, but, now that she looked for him, he had gone.

She got up, crossed the room and sat down on another chair which was black, probably ebony. It had a curial appearance that suggested the senate, not the senate at Washington, but the S. P. Q. of Rome. It was quite near the hyacinth curtain and behind the latter she heard voices. Like the rooms they were subdued. She could distinguish nothing. Yet there must be a bell somewhere and she decided that if Paliser did not shortly return, she would ring. The gnawing was sharper. She was very hungry.

Again she got up and looked from a window. It gave on a garden in which there was underbush that the moon was chequering with amber spots. After all, it was a queer sort of a wedding. But what had she expected? Grace Church? St. Thomas'? Invitations a fortnight in advance, aisles banked with flowers, filled with snobs and the garbage of the Wagner score that Ma Tamby had tossed after her? Not by a long shot!

She turned. Paliser was entering. But the gnawing had nibbled away the enchantment and, as she turned, she looked rather cross.

Paliser, noticing that but mistaking the cause, said very sympathetically: "During the Terror, a princess jogged along, smelling a rose. Marriage is no worse than the guillotine, besides being much less summary. Will you come?"

"Less summary? I should say so!" Cassy retorted. "It is far too lingering."

But she followed him out into another hall, one that was hung with tapestries. They were dim and em-

broidered with what seemed to be pearls. On the floor was a rug, dim also, narrow, very long, that extended to a room, lined with high-placed bookcases and set with low-placed lights. In the room stood a man. He wore a long black coat and a waistcoat that reached to his collar. In his hand was a book.

"Dr. Grantly," said Paliser, who added, "Miss Cara."

Dr. Grantly bowed but without distinction. Because of the position of the lights, his face was obscured and what Cassy could discern of it she judged young and uninteresting. When Paliser had first mentioned him—and how long ago it seemed!—she had fancied him old. She had fancied too that he would have little side whiskers. The fact that he was young was not a disappointment. Clergymen, whether old or young, did not interest her. She did not care for them, or for churches, or the services in them. The ceremonial of worship seemed to her empty. Creeds professed but not practised seemed to her vain. But she would carry an injured cat for miles. A lost dog was found the moment she spotted it. She did what good she could, not because it is a duty, but for a superior reason. She liked to do it. One may be a Christian without caring for churches.

"Dearly beloved——"

In the depths over which she had passed, excitement and the novelty of it had, until then, supported her. But at that exordium, instantly, they fell away; instantly fear, like a wave, swept over her. Instantly she felt, and the feeling is by no means agreeable, that she was struggling with the intangible in a void. But she had not intended to drown, or no, that was not it, she had not wanted to marry. Aware of the depths,

not until then had she known their peril. Until that moment she had not realised their menace. Then abruptly it caught and submerged her.

"I require and charge you both as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment——"

The solemnity of the sonorous exhortation was water in her ears. The sound of it reached her confusedly, in a jumble. She was drowning and it was unconsciously, in this condition, that poked by Paliser, she heard herself uttering the consenting words that are so irrevocable and so fluid.

It was over then—or nearly! The thought of it shook her from the mental swoon. Behind her some one spoke and she wondered who it could be. But a movement distracted her. Dr. Grantly had shifted the book from one hand to the other and as absently she followed the movement, she saw that the hand that now held the book was maimed or else malformed.

But what immediately occupied her were other words which, prompted by him, she was automatically repeating. The words are very beautiful, really exalting, they are words that spread peace as dawn spreads upon the sea. Yet, in their delivery, twice Dr. Grantly tripped and, though on each occasion he pulled himself up and went on again without embarrassment, it seemed to Cassy that he did so without dignity.

The impression, which was but momentary, drifted; another distraction intervened, her finger was being ringed. I'm done for! she despairingly thought.

"Amen!"

"Ouf!" Cassy gasped. It was really over, over at last, and still a little bewildered, she turned. The butler and the maid were leaving the room, which they must have entered when the ceremony first over-

whelmed her. From the hall a slight cackle floated back.

It amused them, she generously reflected.

Paliser did not notice. He was addressing the clergyman. "Thank you very much, doctor." He turned to his bride. "Cutting your head off may have been worse, don't you think?"

If I can't be gay at least I should appear so, she told herself and desperately she laughed.

Meanwhile the man of God, relapsing into the man of the world, or of its neighbourhood, did not seem to know what to do with himself. He dropped the book, picked it up, put it on the table. Considerately, in his Oxford voice, Paliser instructed him.

"You must be going? Ah, well, I appreciate. Let me thank you again."

Dr. Grantly mumbled something, smiled at the bride, smiled at the happy man or, more exactly, he smiled at an envelope which the happy man was giving him and which, Cassy divined, contained his fee. How much? she wondered. However much or little, it was excessive.

The hall took him and the groom grappled with the bride, embracing her with that rudimentary paranoia which lawful passion comports.

She struggled free and, a bit breathless, but with the same desperate gaiety, exclaimed: "If this is matrimony, give me war!"

"Perhaps you would prefer dinner first," Paliser, with recovered calm, replied.

Wouldn't she, though! Now that she was definitely dished, hunger again bit at her and she accompanied Paliser through the dim hall, through the music-room, through the long suite, into the dining-room where,

as before, three men, with white sensual faces, stood waiting.

Paliser motioned. "Mrs. Paliser will sit there. Move the other chair here." He drew a seat for her and gave additional instructions. "There will be people here to-morrow. If we are motoring, have them wait."

"What people?" asked Cassy, before whom an uncomfortable vision of her father and Ma Tamby jumped.

Paliser replied in French. "A man and a woman or two from Fifth Avenue."

I wonder where that bundle is, thought Cassy who said: "A man? What man?"

"Oh, just a clerk. That is almond soup. Do you care for it?" He looked down at his plate which appeared to engross him.

Cassy raised her spoon. "A penny for your thoughts."

He looked up. "They are worth far more. I was thinking of the night I first met you."

Cassy laughed. "And Ma Tamby's ham and eggs?"

Paliser, raising his own spoon, added: "It was Lennox who introduced us. You knew he was engaged to Miss Austen? Well, she has broken it."

Cassy must have swallowed the soup the wrong way. She coughed, lifted her napkin and saw a road, long, dark, infinitely fatiguing on which she was lost. But the soup adjusted itself, the road turned to the right. Lennox had never so much as said boo! In anger at herself she rubbed her mouth hard and put the napkin down.

Paliser, who had been tasting and sniffing at a glass, looked at the butler. "What is this? Take it away.

It is not fit for a convict." He looked over at Cassy. "I am sorry."

"One gets so bored with good wine," said Cassy, who recently had been reading Disraeli. Yet she said it absently, the unscrambled eggs about her.

But the saying was new to Paliser, to whom few things were. He relished it accordingly and the more particularly because of its fine flavour of high-bred insolence.

From where he sat, he eyed her. Although she was eating, which is never a very engaging occupation, her face had an air that was noble and reserved. At the moment, a scruple in which there was a doubt, presented itself. In view of the coming draft act, it occurred to him that he might have gone the wrong way about it. But the scruple concerned merely the expediency of the adventure. It was not related to his conscience. He had none.

Now, though, a new decanter was before him; he tried it, drank of it, judged it decent and drank again. Being decent, it was not heady. It did not affect him. Cassy had done that. In her was a bouquet which the vineyard of youth and beauty alone produces. He had hankered for it. Now, like the decanter, it was before him. He could drink his fill. Then like the other wine, he could send it away.

XXI

THE elder Paliser, seated in the hall of his town house, held a cup. In the chair, a doge had throned. On the bottom of the cup was an N topped by a crown. The cup contained hot milk.

Returning, a little before, from a drive, he had been helped up the steps, into the hall, into the chair. He had not wished to be helped farther. In the hall, the milk had been brought. As he sipped it, he looked placid, dignified, evil. He looked very much like a wicked old doge.

"When I don't move, it is remarkable how well I feel."

His son, to whom he spoke, sat in a sedan-chair which, delicately enamelled without, was as delicately upholstered within. Through the window of the chair, only the young man's face showed. If you had not known better you might have mistaken it for the face of a lady of an earlier, a politer, though not of a bloodier age. But you would have known better. The hair, powdered white, was absent; so too were the patches; so also was the rouge.

Behind the doge's chair a servant stood. Adjacently was a malachite bench. Beyond was a malachite stairway. The elder Paliser, finishing with the milk, extended the cup. The servant took it and turned. Recesses, back of the stairway, engulfed him.

Monty Paliser straightened. The movement disclosed his collar, the white of his tie.

It was the evening of the fourth day since the wed-

ding. He had motored in to dine at the Austens'. Cassy had seen him go and had seen too uninterrupted hours in the music-room. The prospect was consoling.

But, pending the dinner and with an ample quarter of an hour to the good, he had looked in on his father whom he had found in the hall. Nothing filial had motivated this looking-in. On the surface, it was a visit of circumstance such as one gentleman may pay to another. But, beneath the surface, was an object which, when the servant and the cup had gone, he approached.

"I hope Benny has not been in your way."

"Not in the least. I told him to go back to you."

"Is he still here?"

"I haven't an idea."

"You might send him to Newport."

"You want to be rid of him, eh?"

"The Place does not need three gardeners."

The old man, who seemed to be feeling about for something, scowled. "What it does not need is the atmosphere that you are giving it. You may go to the devil your own way. I sha'n't stop you. But it puts a bad taste in my mouth to have you turn it into a road-house. Damn it, sir, you were born there."

Through the window of the sedan-chair, the young man was watching. He saw it coming and masked himself.

"How funny of Benny to give you such an idea."

Then, straight at him, went the bomb.

"It was not a gift. What I got, I extracted. Why don't you marry? Eh? Why don't you? In order that you might, I made over to you a thing or two. I wish to God, I hadn't. But perhaps you are satisfied. If you are, well and good. As it is, unless you marry, I'll leave the property to Sally's brat and

have him change his name. By Gad, sir, if I don't have some assurance from you and have it now, I'll send for Jeroloman. I will make a new will and I'll make it to-night. If you came here to dine, you can stop on and listen to it."

The bomb was full of fumes. In the still air they floated. But in throwing it, the old man's scowl had deepened. It had become a grimace that creased every wrinkle into prominence. His hand had gone to his chest. Gasping, he held it there. Then presently it fell. His features relaxed and dryly, in an even tone, he resumed: "It is remarkable how well I feel, if I don't talk. Any excitement suffocates me."

In the trench, that the sedan-chair had become, Monty Paliser tightened the mask. "There is no need for any excitement. I will marry. You have my word."

On the great blasoned throne, the old man shifted. The easy victory mollified him. "Ah! You dine here?"

"Thank you, no. I am dining at the Austens'."

"Where?" the elder Paliser asked. He had heard but he wanted it repeated. It seemed vaguely promising.

"At the Austens'. You may remember that the pearl of the household was engaged. It's off."

Slowly the old man twisted. "What is? The engagement?"

"So her mother told me."

"And you are dining there."

"In a few minutes."

The old man took it in, turned it over. It seemed not only victory but peace, and peace with annexation.

"Very good then. I draw the veil over your road-house. Put the young woman in a flat. Put her in

two flats. Nobody who is anybody ever sees anything that was not intended for them. Don't beat the drum. That is all that the right people ask and all I require, except——"

He paused, considered the annexation and added: "I wish you an excellent appetite. Austen himself was a drivelling idiot and his wife used to be a rare old girl—is still, I daresay—but they came of good stock, and the daughter has looks and no brains. You couldn't do better."

He paused again, appeared to lose himself in the past, looked up and suddenly exclaimed: "You are ridiculous in that damned thing! Oblige me by getting out."

The young man extracted himself and sat down on the malachite bench. It was more exposed than the trench and the fumes of the gas bomb that his father had hurled were hazardous still. Additional protection from them was needed and he said: "What will you do about Benny?"

The old man disliked to be questioned. On the arm of his chair he beat with his fingers a quick, brief tattoo.

"Benny belongs to the Place. His father served me there. His grandfather served yours. You don't get such people nowadays."

Negligently the young man smoothed his tie. "Very picturesque and feudal. But I don't want him."

His father did not seem to hear, or to care. He was afar, wandering from it. "Ever notice that he has only one thumb? Same way with his father. Probably a family trait. I wish there were more families like 'em. This house is full of trollops and rascals. So is Newport. The house at Newport is full of rapsallions. Believe I'll offer it to the Gov-

ernment for a hospital. I wish to God Sally would come over and run it. Do you ever hear from her?"

The young man stood up. "Never."

"I don't doubt she is well rid of Balaguine. I've run into a baker's dozen of Russian princes. All canaille. What she wanted to marry him for, God only knows, and in saying that I exaggerate. Nice mess they have made of things there. Are you going? Oblige me by touching the bell."

The young man touched it and, while he was at it, something else. "Couldn't you oblige me by shipping Benny to Newport?"

The old man motioned. It was as though he dismissed it. "My compliments to her mother and remember that I have your word. Don't dilly-dally. Good God, sir, can't you realise that any day now you may be drafted? You've no time to lose. If I were your age, I'd enlist to-morrow. Don't stand on one foot, you make me nervous."

The son, putting on a white glove, got back at it. "I was asking you about Benny."

Again the old man shifted. "Hum! Well! Since you make a point of it. Yes. I'll send him to Newport."

"You won't forget?"

"I never forget," replied the old man, who, from that moment, forgot it utterly—until the following night when throttlingly it leaped at him.

Even if he had remembered, it could only have delayed the course of events. Benny went the next day and, in going, merely accelerated a drama which perhaps was preordered.

But now, from behind the recesses of the malachite stairway, a rascal appeared and approached and opened

a bronze door, from which a young gentleman passed out and entered his car.

It was dark then, darker than convenient. There are ways that are obscure. The martyr who discovered that virtue is its own reward, died unwept, unhonoured, unsung. History does not know him. Perhaps he was an editor. But he bequeathed a valid idea.

As the car swam on, Monty Paliser was conscious of it. It would, he reflected, simplify matters very much if his father died immediately. He had no ill-feeling toward him, no good-feeling, no feeling whatever. For the property conveyed to him and otherwise bestowed, he had no gratitude. These gifts were in the nature of things. Gifts similar or cognate his father had received, as also had his grandfather, his great-grandfather and so on *ab initio*. They were possessions handed down and handed over for the greater glory of the House. He had therefore no gratitude for them. When the time came he would repeat the process and expect no gratitude either. Meanwhile though the gifts were adequate, there were more en route, so many that they would lift him within hailing distance of the richest men in the world. Though whether that were worth five minutes of perplexity, ten minutes of tears, a row and, possibly, your name in the papers, depended on the point of view.

In considering it, he found himself—and very much to his disgust—rememorating a moral axiom: Great wealth is a great burden. The axiom was a favourite with his father, who had sickened him with it. But on its heels always there had trod a variant. “By Gad, sir, you can say what you like, it puts you in a position to tell anybody to go to hell.”

The variant had a lilt, a go, a flourish. To employ a vulgarism of the hour, it had the punch. It landed you and between the eyes. It required neither commentaries nor explanation. It was all there. It was tangible as a brickbat, self-evident as the sun.

In admiring it, the young man philosophised stochically. Did he not have enough for that already?

Yes, but later? Later might he not want to philosophise less stoically and more luxuriously? It was a problem. Meanwhile there was Cassy. He had no wish to lose her. Yet about him already was the shadow of the inevitable draft act. That was not a problem merely, it was a pit.

Meanwhile there was Cassy whom he did not wish to lose. She was delightful, delectable, delicious. Not divine though, thank heaven! The gleam in her eyes could be quite infernal. The gleam heightened a charm which in itself was fugitive. He recognised that. However delicious a dish may be, no man can feed on it always. Not he at any rate. But, for the time being, it was very appetising. For the present, it did very well. On the other hand, Margaret Austen represented a succession of courses which, in addition to being appetising, would lift him to a parity with the super-rich.

It was certainly perplexing. But it is a long turning that has no lane. He was a decent whip and a string made up of Margaret and Cassy was one that, let him alone for it, he could handle.

But now the car had stopped. Abandoning perplexity, he went on and up.

XXII

HERE you are! Bright and late as usual!" In her fluted voice, with her agreeable smile, Mrs. Austen greeted him. The lady was attired in a manner that left her glitteringly and splendidly bare. With her, in the cluttered drawing-room, were Margaret, Kate Schermerhorn, Poppet Bleecker, Verelst, Cantillon and Ogston.

"Will you take my daughter out?" Mrs. Austen, with that smile, continued. "Oh!" she interrupted herself to remark. "You have not congratulated Mr. Cantillon. Has no little bird told you? It's this dear child Kate. Just now—don't you think?—engagements, like lilacs, are in the air." She turned to Verelst. "Grey deceiver!"

Verelst crooked his arm. "However much I tried to deceive, I got grey before I could."

"What are you laughing at?" Mrs. Austen with her tireless smile enquired of Paliser, who, after speaking to the girls, had said something to Cantillon.

"Somersaults being a specialty of his, I was telling him that now is the time for a triple one."

Paliser turned to Margaret. She had said nothing. She was very pale. Mute, white, blonde, she was a vision.

At table, Verelst, addressing him, asked: "How is your father?"

"Thank you. Enjoying his usual poor health." He turned again to Margaret. "No one could mistake my father for an auctioneer. He has so few admirations. But he knew your father and admired him greatly."

Margaret made no reply. She was thinking of the land of Splendours and Terrors, where the princess sat in chains. Margaret envied her. Over the hill the true knight was hastening and Margaret knew, as we all know, what happened then. It is a very pretty story, but it can be equally sad to a sorrowing girl who has no true knight, or who had one, and who found that he was neither knightly nor true.

Paliser misconstrued her silence. About her eyes and mouth was an expression that is displayed by those who have suffered from some long malady or from some perilous constraint. That also he misconstrued. He had been told she had washed her hands of Lennox and had washed them with the soap of indifference, which is the most effective of all. He was not credulous but he had believed it. The idea that her throat was choked and her heart a haunt of regret, did not occur to this subtle young man. He attributed both her silence and her expression to neuralgia. The latter did not disturb him. But her loveliness did. It inundated him. The gallery of his memory was hung with fair faces. Her face exceeded them all.

The dinner proceeded. Presently, Kate Schermerhorn called over at him. "Who was the damsel I saw you making up to in the Park the other day?"

Paliser turned to her. "I have forgotten."

"I don't wonder. You seemed to have lost your head."

"Probably then because it wasn't you."

"Fiddlesticks! You looked as though you could cut your throat for her. Didn't you feel that way? I am sure you did."

"You must be thinking of Cantillon. That's the way he looks at you. If he didn't, he wouldn't have

any feeling at all. One might even say he was quite heartless."

Kate was laughing. In laughing she showed her red mouth and her teeth, small, white, a trifle uneven, and, though she continued to show them, her laughter ceased. With her red mouth open, she stared. That mouth closed, opened again. She was saying something.

Everybody was exclaiming. All were hurriedly getting up.

Paliser turned to Margaret. She had gone.

Verelst now was between him and her chair. He was bending over. Bending also was Mrs. Austen. On the other side were Cantillon, Ogston and Miss Bleecker.

Then, as the surprise of it lifted Paliser, he saw that they were lifting her.

"Brandy!" said Verelst. "Tell the man."

"Permit me!" Without officiousness, without noticeable shoves, Paliser got among them and got on his knees beside the girl whom Verelst and Mrs. Austen were supporting.

Mrs. Austen wanted to wink at him. Instead, she made way. He took her place, took the girl in his arms and thought he would like to keep her there—though not, of course, forever. But he said: "The other room, perhaps."

Margaret's head was on his shoulder. She raised it. Her eyes had opened. She looked at him, at the arms that were about her. A shudder shook her. Verelst stretched a hand, Ogston another. With them, but otherwise without effort, she stood up.

Cantillon exclaimed at her. "Right as rain again! I say, Miss Austen, you did give us a start!"

Yet at once, and so endearingly, with the air of an

elder sister, Mrs. Austen resumed the maternal functions. "Dearest child, you have been overdoing it!"

Kate patted the girl. "Margaret! I nearly fainted too. I was looking at you. You went over like that!"

"Sorry," said Margaret evenly. Her hands had gone to the back of her head. She dropped them and added: "If you will excuse me."

Lovingly her mother dismissed her. "The smelling-salts! You will find them somewhere." The lady looked about. "Shall we have coffee in the other room? You men can smoke there if you like, or here if you prefer."

It was quite modern. But Verelst was old, therefore old-fashioned. He preferred the dining-room. Already the girls had followed Margaret. Mrs. Austen passed out. Verelst sat down. So also did Cantillon and Ogston. But Paliser, who had nothing to say to them, accompanied Mrs. Austen.

"It never happened to her before," she told him. "Where shall you sit? Here, by me?" In speaking she made room on the sofa and with amiable suspicion eyed him. "You hadn't said anything to her, had you?"

Paliser shook his handsome head. "I wanted to."

Pleasantly she invited it. "Yes?"

"I wanted to ask her to marry me."

There he was dangling, and what a fish! The dear woman licked her chops, not vulgarly, of course, but mentally.

Paliser, who knew perfectly well what she was at, smiled tantalisingly. "It is beastly to boast, but I am an epicure."

What in the world does he mean? the dear woman wondered. But she said: "Of course you are."

Paliser, who was enjoying himself hugely, resumed:

"An epicure, you know, postpones the finest pleasures. He does so sometimes because of the enchantment of distance and again because he can't help himself. That has been my case."

It was fully a moment before Mrs. Austen got it. Then she said: "But I told you, didn't I? Mr. Lennox is dead and buried."

It was quick work. Paliser, admiring her agility, laughed. "So recently though! The immortelles have not had time to fade."

That would have made a saint swear! Not being a saint, Mrs. Austen contented herself with virtuous surprise. "But there were none! I told you that. I told you that any attraction he may have had for my child, he shocked straight out of her. Not deliberately. Dear me, I would not have you fancy such a thing for a moment. Nor would I misjudge him. I hope I am too conscientious. But such interest as the child had in him—an interest I need hardly say that was girlish and immature—he destroyed."

The picture, bold but crude, had its defects. To remedy them, Mrs. Austen applied the brush. "That singing-girl! You know whom I mean. I saw you with her the night we went to the Bazaar."

Paliser nodded. He knew indeed! He knew too that, for a moment, he had fancied that Cassy was in love with Lennox. But that idea he had long since abandoned and what she could now be doing in this galley intrigued him.

With a free hand Mrs. Austen laid on the colours. "You will hardly credit it, but we as good as caught him with her. As good or as bad. It is a matter of taste. For me it was very painful. A woman should be spared such an experience. As for Margaret, while the child certainly did not understand—how could she?

—yet, even in her innocence, she realised—well—that he is just what you said.”

It was a bit thick and Paliser began to laugh.

Mrs. Austen saw that he did not believe her. The fact annoyed and in vexation she piled it on. “Afterward, in this very room, I taxed him with it and he admitted it.”

What a lie! thought Paliser, who specialised in that article. But, a second thought prompting, he wondered whether it were a lie. His knowledge of Cassy refuted it. At the same time, where women are concerned, you never know. One thing, however, he did know. In his quality of expert he knew that there are statements which, whether true or false, may come in handy and, comfortably, he smiled.

“So that was the reason why the engagement was broken.”

“What more would you have?” replied the candid creature, who now felt that he had swallowed it.

Quite as comfortably, Paliser returned to his muttons. “I may cease then to be an epicure?”

There was the fish again, but how to land him? The glittering fisherlady could not bind and gag the bait and drop her into his mouth. At any such attempt, the bait would pack and go, might even go without packing. Yet there was the fish, eager, willing, the gills awiggle. Barring a few gold-fish in Bradstreet, in Burke and in Lemprière, this fish was the pick of the basket. To see him glide away, and for no other earthly reason than because the bait refused to be hooked, was simply inhuman. Flesh and blood could not stand it. No, nor ingenuity either. Instantly the angler saw that in default of bait, a net may do the trick and, with the ease of a prestidigitateur, she produced one.

"You have my blessing!"

Paliser laughed and bowed. He was in it, it was where he wanted to be and he liked it. But in view of existing domestic arrangements, he was in it a bit too soon and, wriggling through a mesh, he stopped laughing and looked solemn.

"You are very good. But beforehand my father will expect to be consulted and, just at present, that is impossible. The physicians would forbid it."

"The poor dear old man! You don't mean——"

Paliser half raised a hand. The gesture was slight but expressive. One never knew!

But so much the better, thought Mrs. Austen. Pending the delay she could so bombard the bait, bombard her day in, day out, and the whole night through, that, like Liège and Namur, her resistance would crumble, and meanwhile he would come in for everything, or nearly everything, she reflected, and the reflection prompting, she affected concern.

"Has your sister been informed?"

"I cabled her to-day," said Paliser, who had done nothing of the kind.

With the same concern, Mrs. Austen lied as freely. "It is too sad for words." But at once the air of the sympathiser departed, replaced by that of the hostess. Through one door the men were entering. Through another came the girls.

Kate Schermerhorn approached. "Dear Mrs. Austen, Margaret's all right, but she has a headache." As she spoke, she threw a glance at Cantillon.

Poppet Bleecker also approached. "It is too bad, Margaret is such a dear! I would like to stop on but they tell me my maid is here. Thank you so much, dear Mrs. Austen.

The lady stood up. "But you are not all going!"

They all were though. She knew it and was glad of it. The object of the dinner was achieved and achievement, however satisfactory, is fatiguing. "You too!" she successively exclaimed at Ogston and Cantillon. "And you also!" she exclaimed at Paliser, to whom, dropping her voice, she added: "If possible, remember me to him."

As they went, Verelst surveyed her. He stood against the mantel, his back to the empty grate.

Turning she saw him. "Well, what now?"

Verelst, adjusting his glasses, said, and distantly enough: "What now? No, what next?"

Mrs. Austen sat down. "Peter, if you ever loved me, don't adopt that tone."

"It is not the tone, it is the tune and the tune is yours."

"Tune? What tune? What on earth are you talking about?"

"The tune to which the dinner was set. I heard it. Margaret heard it. It knocked her out."

She raised her eyes to him, made them pathetic. "Peter, I haven't a penny."

"You have twenty thousand a year."

"Nineteen, not a dollar more, and that is genteel poverty and there's nothing genteel in poverty now."

Verelst tugged at his moustache. "Tell me this. Is she to marry him?"

In affected surprise, she started. "How you do jump at conclusions."

Angrily he nodded. "I appear to have jumped at the correct one."

But his anger had gained her. She faced him. "Heavens and earth! What have you against him? What have you all against him? My eyes are as good as any one's. I can't see it."

"You might feel it then."

"Feel what?"

Verelst tugged again at his moustache. He had never heard of elementals and, if he had heard, he would not have believed in them. He knew nothing of auræ—which photography has captured. He was very old foggy. But he knew an honest man when he saw one and a gentleman before he opened his mouth.

"Feel what?" Mrs. Austen repeated.

Verelst, thrashing about, could not get it, but he said: "I can't describe it, but it's something. His father had it. He——"

"His father is at death's door."

"Ah! Is he? Well, I'm sorry for that. M. P. used to be no better than the law allows—and the law is very lenient."

"You were too."

"I daresay. But M. P. has got over it. Without boasting, I think I have also. But that is neither here nor there. In the old days, I have seen people shrink from him."

"Nonsense! Precious little shrinking I ever did."

"Timidity was never one of your many virtues."

"Don't be coarse, Peter, and if possible don't be stupid. If you know anything against Monty, say it. I may find it in his favour."

Impatiently Verelst motioned. "Decent men avoid him."

"And you!" Mrs. Austen retorted. "What do you call yourself? You are always civil to him."

Verelst showed his teeth. "One of the few things life has taught me is to be civil to everybody."

"Except to me. Now do sit down and make yourself uncomfortable. You have made me uncomfort-

able enough. Any one might think you a country parson."

But Verelst, scowling at the dial which the legs of the nymph upheld, removed his glasses. "I am going." He moved to the door, stopped, half turned, motioned again. "Tell Margaret I would rather see her in her coffin."

Angrily she started. "I'll tell her nothing of the kind."

It was his back that she addressed. She saw him go, saw too her anger go with him. The outer door had not closed before the tune of which he had spoken was dispersing it.

But was it a tune? It seemed something far rarer. In it was a whisper of waters, the lap of waves, the muffled voice of a river, which, winding from hill to sea, was pierced by a note very high, very clear, entirely limpid, a note that had in it the gaiety of a sunbeam, a note that mounted in loops of light, expanding as it mounted, until, bursting into jets of fire, it drew from the stream's deepest depths the sonority and glare of its riches.

The ripple of it ran down the spine of this woman, who at heart was a Hun and to whom the harmonies disclosed, not the mythical gleam of the Rheingold, but the real radiance of the Paliser wealth.

At the glow of it she rubbed her hands.

XXIII

IN the club window, on the following afternoon, Jones was airing copy.

"Capua must have been packed with yawns. It is the malediction of mortals to want what they lack until they get it, when they want it no more. Epicurus said that or, if he did not, Lucretius said it for him. 'Surgit amari aliquid.' But here I am running into quotations when the only ones that interest anybody are those in the Street. Conditions here are revolting. Nowhere at any time has there been a metropolis that so stank to heaven. The papers drip with stocks and scandals and over there, before the massed artillery, the troops are wheeling down to death. But wheeling is perhaps poetic. The Marne was the last battle in the grand style."

"I don't see what that has to do with Capua," said Verelst.

"Nor I," Jones replied. "But, come to think of it, there is a connection. In Capua everybody yawned their heads off. In Flanders and Champagne they are shot off. Life swings like a pendulum between boredom and pain. When the world is not anæmic, it is delirious. If ever again its pulse registers normal, sensible people will go back to Epicurus, whose existence was one long lesson in mental tranquillity. By the Lord Harry, the more I consider it, the more con-

vinced I become that there is nothing else worth having. Niente, nada, rien. Nothing whatever."

Verelst smiled. "In that case it is hardly worth while getting excited over it." He raised the lapel of his coat. There were violets in it. He took a whiff and added: "Has Lennox been here to-day?"

But Jones did not know.

Regretfully, Verelst continued: "He goes to Min-eola to-morrow and soon he will be over the top."

Jones lit a cigarette. "Assuming that he gets back, the women will be mad about him. Some of them at any rate."

Verelst rolled an enquiring eye.

"Of course they will," Jones resumed. "Times have changed precious little since Victor Hugo.

*'Les belles ont le goût des héros. Le sabreur
Effroyable, trainant après lui tant d'horreur
Qu'il ferait reculer jusqu'à la sombre Hécate,
Charme la plus timide et la plus délicate.
Sur ce, battez tambours! Ce qui plait à la bouche
De la blonde aux yeux doux, c'est le baiser farouche.
La femme se fait faire avec joie un enfant,
Par l'homme qui tua, sinistre et triomphant.
Et c'est la volupté de toutes ces colombes
D'ouvrir leur lit à ceux qui font ouvrir les tombes.'*

"What rhythm! What music! The score is Napoleonic but——"

"Hello!" Verelst interrupted. Before the window a car had passed. He was looking at it. On the back seat was a man in a high hat and an overcoat. "M. P.!" he exclaimed.

"What of it?" Jones asked.

Verelst removed his glasses and looked distrust-

fully at them. It was as though he doubted their vision. Then, after a moment he said: "Last night I heard he was dying."

"Which," Jones remarked, "is the aim, the object and the purpose of life. But apparently he has not achieved it yet. Apparently also you are a futurist. The Napoleonic score did not interest you."

Verelst, resuming his glasses, replied: "It would not interest Lennox, if that is what you mean. He has been hit too hard."

Jones nodded. He knew all about it. It had even suggested a story, a famous story; one that was told in Babylon and has been retold ever since; the story of lovers vilely parted in the beginning and virtuously united at the end. It is a highly original story, to which anybody can give a fresh twist and Jones had planned to have the hero killed at the front and the heroine marry the villain, but only to divorce the latter before the hero—whose death had been falsely gazetted—limps in.

But Jones knew his trade. He knew that the reader always balks unless the hero gets the heroine first-hand and he had thought of making the villain an invalid. Yet at that too he knew the reader would balk. The reader is so nice-minded!

Now, the plot recurring, he said to Verelst: "Your knowledge of women has, I am sure, made you indulgent."

"Not in the least."

"But——"

"Look here," Verelst interrupted. "When I was young and consequently very experienced, I was indulgent. But monsters change you. Last night I dined with one."

"Enviably mortal!"

"You remember Abraham?" Verelst continued. "His name was Abraham—wasn't it?—that benevolent old man in the Bible who made the sacrifice of sacrificing an animal instead of his son? Well, last night it seemed to me that there are women Abrahams, only less benevolent. The altar was veiled, the knife was concealed, but the victim was there—a girl for whom, at your age, I would have died, or offered to die, which amounts to the same thing. What is more to the point, at your age, or no, for you are much older than your conversation would lead one to believe, but in my careless days I offered to die for her mother. I swore I could not live without her. That is always a mistake. It is too flattering, besides being untrue. Perhaps she so regarded it. In any event another man fared better or worse. Afterward, time and again, he said to me: 'Peter, for God's sake, run away with her.' Am I boring you?"

"Enormously."

"Well, he was very gentlemanly about it. Without making a fuss at home, he went away and died in a hospital. She was very grateful to him for that. But her gratitude waned when she came in for his money. It was adequate but not opulent, the result being that she tried to train her daughter for the great matrimonial steeplechase. Just here the plot thickens. Recently the filly shied, took the bit in her teeth and—hurrah, boys!—she was off on her own, until her mother jockeyed her up to a hurdle that she could not take and the filly came a cropper. But her mother was still one too many for her. She had her up in a jiffy and now she is heading her straight for the sweepstakes."

"Excuse me," Jones with affected meekness put in. "I assume that the sacrificial victim and the filly are one and the same."

"Your perspicacity does you much credit."

Jones laughed. "I have my little talents. But you! The wizardry with which you mix metaphors is beautiful. You produce a dinner-table and transform it into an altar which instantly becomes a racecourse. That is what I call genius. But to an every-day sort of chap like me, would your mind being less cryptic?"

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes."

"So can I."

Again Jones laughed. "Not in my neighbourhood. You were talking of Lennox and drifted from him into the Bible. Your thoughts of the one recalled studies of the other and at once you had Abraham's daughter downed on the racecourse. Well, she won't be."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is my business to see things before they occur. Miss Austen——"

"I never mentioned her," Verelst heatedly exclaimed. "You have no right to——"

"I admit it. But because of Lennox the whole matter has preoccupied me and quite as much, I daresay, as it has distressed you."

"I don't see at all what you have to do with it."

"Perhaps not. But preoccupation may lead to crystal-gazing. Now I will wager a red pippin that I can tell what you said at the steeplechase to the steeplestakes. You asked after his father."

Verelst stared. A man of the world and, as such,

at his ease in any circumstances, none the less he was startled. "How in God's name did you get that?"

"It is very simple. Five minutes ago his father sailed by. You made a remark about him. The remark suggested a train of thought which landed you at the racecourse where you saw, or intimated that you saw, the steeplestakes. But what visible sweepstakes are there except M. P.'s son? You and M. P. are friends. It is only natural that you should ask about him."

Verelst turned uneasily. "I don't yet see how you got it. The only thing I said is that I heard he was dying."

"And five minutes ago you exclaimed at his resurrection. There is a discrepancy there that is very suggestive."

"It is none of my making then."

"It is none the less suggestive. The death-bed was invented."

"M. P. may have recovered."

"Yes, men of his age make a practice of jumping into their death-bed and then jumping out. It is good for them. It keeps them in training."

"Oh, rubbish!" Verelst resentfully exclaimed.

"No," Jones pursued. "The story was invented and the invention had a reason. If you like, you may ask what it is."

"You seem to be very good at invention yourself. I shall ask nothing of the kind."

"But you would like to know and I will tell you. It was invented to delay a possible announcement. It could have had no other object."

"I said nothing of any announcement," Verelst

angrily protested. "What announcement are you talking about?"

"The heading of the filly for the sweepstakes. The expression—very graphic by the way—is your own."

"Graphic or not I wish you would drop it. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

"Why, confound it, admitting the engagement, which I ought not to admit for it is not out yet, why should he play for delay?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Jones, whom the spectacle of Paliser and Cassy sailing up the Riverside had supplied with an impression or two. "I thought I would interest you. He played for delay because he feared that if it were known, a pitcher of ice-water might come dashing over it."

"Why do you say that?" asked Verelst, eager and anxious enough for a spoke—if spoke there could be—to shove in a certain lady's wheels.

"Given the man and the deduction is easy."

The spoke was receding. Verelst, swallowing his disappointment, retorted: "Incoherence is easy too."

"Well, you are right there," Jones, lighting another cigarette, replied. "But there is nothing incoherent in the fact that fear is magnetic. What we dread, we attract. If our winning young friend fears the pitcher, the pitcher will probably land on him. That is the reason why, to vary your various metaphors, I declared that there would be no downing on the race-course. On the contrary and look here. I will wager you not one pippin or two pippins, I will go so far as to lay a whole basket that Miss Austen becomes Mrs. Lennox."

Verelst sniffed. "You don't know her mother."

"No. I have not that honour. But I enjoy a bowing acquaintance with logic."

"Do you, now? I wonder if it bows back. I'll book your bet."

"Very good. Make it fancy pippins."

Verelst stood up. "Fancy is the only term that could be applied them."

"And of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," Jones told himself as the old man moved away.

He looked about. The great room had filled. Stocks, money, war, the odour of alcohol, the smell of cigars, the rustling of evening papers, the sound of animated talk about nothing whatever, the usual atmosphere had reassembled itself.

From it he turned to the window, to the westering sun, to the motors, the smart gowns and the women who looked so delightful and of whom all had their secrets—secrets trivial, momentous, perverse or merely horrible.

Again he turned. Lennox, who had approached, was addressing him. "You were at the law school. I have to make a will. Will you help me?"

Serviceably Jones sprang up. "Come to my shop. It is just around the corner"

XXIV

AMONG the old brocades with which the room was fitted and which, together with the silver bed and the enamelled faïence, gave it an earlier century air, Cassy stood before a cheval-glass.

She was properly dressed. Her costume, light cloth, faintly blue, was exquisitely embroidered. Beneath it was lingerie of the kind which, it is said, may be drawn through a ring. Behind and between was Cassy, on whose docked hair sat a hat that was very unbecoming and therefore equally smart.

A moment before she had thanked and dismissed Emma. Emma was the maid. With a slant of the eye, that said and suppressed many things, Emma had gone.

Through the open windows came the call of birds, the smell of fresh turf. A patch of sky was visible. It was tenderly blue. There was a patch too of grass that showed an asparagus green.

From the mirror Cassy went to a table and, from a jade platter, took a ring. It was made of six little hoops each set with small stones. She put it on. The platter held other rings. There was a sapphire, inch-long, deep and dark. She put that on. There was also an Australian opal and an Asian emerald, the latter greener than the grass. She put these on. Together with the wedding-ring they made quite a show. Too much of a show, she thought.

Like the costume, the hat, like other costumes, more hats and box after box of lingerie, they had all surprisingly dumped themselves, there, at her feet, the day after the wedding. The bundle, which she had brought with her, she had found very useless and so awkward that she would have given it to Emma, had it not seemed unsuited to a young person manifestly so fine. Since then it had been tucked away in a cupboard, safely out of sight.

That was just five days ago, a brief eternity, during which life seemed to be driving her headlong to some unimagined goal. Until the evening previous she had had barely a moment. But on that evening, Paliser, who was dining at the Austens', had given her a few hours to herself.

Now, on this afternoon, he was again in town.

The air was very still. Afar, a train bellowed, rumbled, died away. From the garage came the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated on the hillside beyond. On the lawn, a man in an apron was at work. Otherwise the air was still, fragrant, freighted with spring.

Cassy, turning from the table, went to the mirror again and tilted the hat. However unbecoming, it was certainly smart, and Cassy wondered what her father would think of Mrs. Monty Paliser.

In the spaciousness of the name, momentarily she lost herself. It is appalling to be a snob. But there are attributes that pour balm all over you. In the deference of the bored yet gracious young women who, with robes et manteaux, had come all the way from Fifth Avenue, there had been a flagon or two of that balm. In the invariable "Thank you, mem's" of the

Paliser personnel there had been more. It is appalling to be a snob. There are perfumes that appeal.

Then also, particularly after Harlem, the great, grave, silent house had a charm that was enveloping, almost enchanted. Apparently uncommanded, it ran itself, noiselessly, in ordered grooves. Cassy fancied that somewhere about there must be a majordomo who competently saw to everything and kept out of the way. But she did not know. In her own rooms she was now at home, as she was also at home in the state chambers on the floor below. In regard to the latter, she had an idea—entirely correct, by the way—that at Lisbon, the royal palace—when there was one—could not have been more suave. But the rest of the house was as yet unexplored, though in regard to the upper storey she had another idea, that there was a room there close-barred, packed with coffins.

The idea delighted her. In this Palace of the White Cat it was the note macabre, the proper note, the note that synchronised the circumambient enchantments. In the historical nights of which Perrault told, the princess had but a gesture to make, the offender sank dead. At once a bier was produced, the corpse was hurried away, and the veils of charm restored fell languorously.

Yet, in that historical epoch, there subsisted—perhaps as a reminder of the vanities even of fairyland—the rose-leaf suggestively crumpled. The crumple affected Cassy but far less than she had expected. Paliser had been very gentlemanly. He had deferred to her in all things, agreed with her about everything, and though none the less he always had his own way, yet the pedestal was so obvious that if she had not

known otherwise she might have thought herself continuously upon it.

The crumple was not there, or at least only such crumple as she had naturally awaited. The discomfort of the leaf consisted in the fact that married she was not mated, that she did not love him, and probably never could.

Now, as she tilted her hat, the spaciousness of the name recurred to her. Its potentialities she had considered before she accepted it, but only because of her father. The idea that it would lift him out of the walk-up, out of Harlem and cold veal, was the one excuse for her voyage to Cytherea. The voyage had been eminently respectable. Undertaken with full ecclesiastical sanction, Aphrodite and her free airs had had nothing to do with it. None the less it was to Cytherea that she had gone—and to Lampsacus also, for all she and her geography knew to the contrary.

Now, though, in tilting her hat, the disreputable beauty of the land was forgotten. She was in another and a fairer realm. A modern garden of the Hesperides lay about her. She saw herself distributing the golden fruit. The mirror showed her a red-crossed Lady Bountiful in an ambulance, in two ambulances, in a herd of ambulances, at the front. There was no end to the golden fruit, no end to his father's money, no end to the good he might allow her to do.

The picture so delighted her that she flushed and in the emotion of it two tears sprang to her eyes that were not of the crying kind.

She dried them, telling herself that if he framed the picture, she could love him, and she would.

It would be all so perfect, not the loving, but the giving, the joy of giving, the joy of always giving,

of giving with both hands, of just shovelling it out and keeping at it, of never saying "No," of saying, "Yes, and here is more and here is more," of saying, too, "Don't thank me, it is for me to thank you." What joy ever was there, or ever will be, that can compare to that!

Why, I'm crazy, she thought, and thought also, he never will but he might, he could and if he should——

Then at once the Paliser of the Savile Row clothes and the St. James's Street boots, the Paliser of the looking-glass hair and the Oxford voice, assumed the hue and stature of a deva. Love him! It would be something higher. It would be worship!

She made a face. It was sheer nonsense. He had an allowance which, obviously, was very liberal and with which he was liberal enough. Unlike many rich men he was not close. But to fancy him beneficent was laughable. Cassy could not imagine him in the rôle of Lord Bountiful. Then too there was something queer about him. He hated to be alone. There are people who kill silence and he was one of them. He was always talking. Cassy could not understand it. To be silent with any one procures an intimacy which talk cannot supply. Moreover solitude was as necessary to her and as refreshing as her bath. Silence and solitude he could not endure. She tilted her nose and went to the window.

That night they were to go to the opera. But in a moment she was to motor in and see her father. Since she put Harlem behind her, she had wondered and worried about him. The condition of his heart was hazardous and she had been told that any excitement might be fatal. She had worried over that, over his sudden rages at tradespeople, and she had been fearful

lest Mrs. Yallum, the janitress, who spoke no known tongue, had, instead of being of use, only enraged him further.

She would see to it, though. It was for that she was going in. As yet she had no money. But there were the rings and one more or one less, what did it matter? Of the lot she preferred the string of hoops. It was quaint, there was nothing philistine about it and probably it had not cost so very much. The emerald was different. It was a stone that would please any woman with plenty of money and a modicum of taste. Probably it had cost a thousand on Fifth Avenue, in which case it would fetch a hundred on Broadway. Or if not, then the sapphire would. Either or both she would hock very willingly. But not the hoop-ring and not the opal, unless she had to, and if Paliser, who apparently noticed nothing and saw everything, asked concerning them, why then she would out with it. Her father was a beggar! Did he expect her to let him starve? But what on earth do you suppose I married you for? For yourself? Take a walk. I sold myself for bread—and butter, and you can fork them over.

At the possibility of any such conversation—and of such language!—she flushed afresh and again called herself a fool. There could be no such conversation. Paliser would never question. He was too indifferent. The consciousness comforted, precisely as, a moment before, the picture of herself shovelling gold had moved her to tears.

Then absently she found herself looking in the garden where the aproned man was at work. But it was Lennox that she saw. Again and again since the wedding-evening, when Paliser had told her of the

unscrambled eggs, she had wondered about the broken engagement. On that evening she had felt that she had taken the wrong road and had lost her way. The feeling was momentary. If Lennox had never been engaged, the result would have been the same. Not once had he so much as said boo! He had not even looked it. At table, on the wedding-evening, the unscrambled eggs had not tasted very good, but reflection had salted them and since then, in reviewing the matter, it had occurred to her that it was none of her business.

Now as she looked out on the garden she wondered whether he had cared very greatly for this girl, for if he had, what then did she mean by throwing over a man who was too good for her, too good for anybody?

She sighed and absently looked again at the gardener. He was bending down, occupied in planting something. Since she had first noticed him he had half-circled a parterre and she was about to telephone and ask if the car were ready when he straightened, turned, extracted a pipe and attempted to light it.

The air was very still, there was no breeze, but the match was ineffective. On his trousers, with a backward movement, he struck another match and raised it to the bowl. The flame, faintly blue, mounted and, with it, a curl of smoke. But it was not Cassy or, more exactly, it was not her objective self, that saw it. It was her subjective self that registered and afterward reproduced that momentary and entirely commonplace incident. What the objective Cassy saw was not the flame or the smoke or the pipe, but the hand that held the match. It was thumbless. Many hands are. From the hand she looked at the man's face and gave a little scream, instantly suppressed.

But her mouth twitched, she tried to swallow and she experienced, what was new to her, an odd sensation in the epiglottis. She did not remember that she had ever been what is called sick at the stomach, none the less she realised that she was on the point of becoming so. Like the little scream, she choked it back. But the immanence of nausea stifled her, and she sat down on a brocade-covered chair.

Her hand had gone to her throat and though almost at once the sensation subsided, she held it there. The gold bands of the rings that were pressed against her throat cooled it, but the palm of the hand was wet. Unconscious of that, she was unaware that she could not think. A crack on the head makes you dizzy and into her dizziness a somnolence had entered. The somnolence dulled all the cells of the brain save one and that one cell, vehemently active, was inciting her to some effort, though to what she did not know.

"I must get up," she presently told herself and told it once more.

In the repetition of the words there was the effect of a spray. The irritability of the one active cell subsided, that of the others was aroused. Somnanbulism ceased. The entire brain awoke. But the truth had not yet fully permeated all the cerebral convolutions and the fact that it had not, manifested itself in the melodramatic phrase which, a week previous, Lennox had uttered, which all have uttered, all at least before whom the unforeseen has sprung.

"It is impossible!"

She got up, went to the window, looked again. There was no impossibility there, no doubt even, or the peradventure of one. There was only the ineluctable truth. The aproned man disclosed it. His thumbless

hand had held the book. From his mouth, in which there was a pipe, had come the benediction. He was Dr. Grantly. That was the ineluctable truth, the truth which already perhaps she had intercepted in the land of Beauty and Horror.

The first sight of it had sickened. Now the physical effect had gone. But the nausea in passing had been replaced by another sensation, deadlier, equally human, that made her red and hot, blurred her eyes, set her quivering, shook her, put her thoughts on fire, vitriolised her with hate.

Nietzsche said that a woman's ability to hate is in proportion to her inability to charm. The brute omitted to add that a woman's ability to charm corresponds to her evolution.

There was nothing evolved about Cassy then. She had lapsed back into the primitive. Like Armide, she could have burned the palace that enchanted her. None the less, she did nothing. To do nothing may be very important. The inactivity saved her. During it, the vitriol vaporised; the hate fell by. She was still trembling, her hands were unsteady, but the fever was departing, the crisis had passed, the primitive had slunk back into the cellars of the subconscious, and, in the chair, to which without knowing it she had returned, she faced it.

Without, some one knocked and, getting no answer, accepted the invitation as most people do.

"Beg pardon, Mrs. Paliser. The car is at the door."

Cassy half turned. "What?"

Emma reconstructed it. "Whenever you are ready, mem, the car will be waiting."

Cassy turned away. "That will do."

"Thank you, mem."

With that air which servants assume, Emma pursed her lips, reopened them, thought better of it, closed them and closed too the door.

Facing it still, Cassy sat in the brocaded chair. Anger had shaken her and gone, taking with it its spawn which hatred is. What inhabited her then was disgust.

I am in a nice mess, she told herself. But she told it without surprise, as though all along it was something which she might have known, could have avoided, but into which she had put her foot. A momentary vision of the red-crossed Lady Bountiful returned and she even smiled at it. It was a sad little smile though.

Abstractedly, she had been turning and twisting the rings. The motion aroused her. It drew her attention to them. They also had something to say. Something which they had been saying ever since the smoke curled from the pipe. She had not heard it then. There had been too many things tumbling about her. But now she did hear. She took them off, stood up and dropped them on the table where they fell between gold-backed brushes and a vase, gorgeous in delicacy, the colour of ox-blood.

From a cupboard she took the rowdy frock, the tam, the basilica underwear and, for a moment, searched and searched vainly for a pair of stockings. In hunting for them she unearthed the bundle, and that together with the other things, she threw on the bed, which was not brocaded, or even daisied. It was silver. A few days before, when she had first seen it, she had clapped her hands. The vase too she had applauded. Now the lovely room, that had seemed so lovely, a curl of smoke had turned into a lupanar.

Quickly, one after another, the modish hat, the delicious frock, the things that could be drawn through a ring, were removed and replaced. In the mirror she looked, stopped, looked again, adjusted the tam and was going to the bed for the bundle when she heard a horn. Head-drawn, she listened.

She would have so much preferred to leave without seeing him or speaking to him. If she could, she would have gone without a word, silently, in the only dignified manner that was possible. But, apparently, matters had arranged themselves otherwise. She went to the bed, took the bundle, moved back to the table and waited.

She did not wait long. Paliser, with the pretence of a knock and a smile on his lips walked in—but not far. That frock, that bundle, the sight of her there, sufficed. He knew. With an awkwardness that was unusual with him, he closed the door and twisted his hat. The smile had gone from his lips. They were dry.

Then as he looked at her and she looked at him—and with what a look!—words seemed such poor things. It was as though already everything had been said, as perhaps in the silent temples of their being, everything, accusations, recriminations, all the futilities of speech had been uttered, impotently, a moment since. A moment earlier she had said her say. As he looked at her he knew that she had and knew too, that before he entered the room, already she had heard his replies.

The consciousness of this, equally shared by both, was so intense that, for a second, Cassy felt that everything happening then had happened ages ago, that she was taking part in a drama rehearsed on a stage that

memory cannot reconstruct but which stood, and, it may be, still stands, back of those doors that close behind our birth.

The hallucination, if it be one, and which, given certain crises of the emotions, is common enough, vanished abruptly as it had come. But two seconds had gone since Paliser entered the room, yet, in those seconds, both recognised that eternity had begun between them.

With his hat, a hat studiously selected, made to order, Paliser motioned and with the same studiousness, selecting a platitude, he produced it. "I was going to take you out."

"After taking me in," Cassy in reviewing the situation subsequently commented. But at the time she said nothing. She merely looked. Her rage was gone, her anger spent. Only disgust remained. It was that which her face expressed. It was withering.

Paliser, steadying himself and, as was perhaps only natural, hedging still, resumed: "But apparently you have other intentions."

What a cad that blackguard is! thought Cassy who still said nothing.

"May I ask what they are?"

Cassy threw up her chin. "My intentions are to leave——"

"But why?"

"Don't presume to interrupt me. My intentions are to leave your assignation-house and have you horse-whipped."

Paliser had been served with strong drink before, but none ever as strong as that. It steadied him. He had expected that when it got to her, as eventually it must, there would be the passionate upbraidings, the

burst of sobs, the Oh! Oh's!, the What will become of me?, the usual run up and down the scale and the usual remedies which a bank account supplies. He had expected all that. He had prescribed for it often. There was not a symptom for which he did not know the proper dose and just when to administer it. But barely had he crossed the threshold before he realised that all his science would be in default.

Cassy presented an entirely new case, but, fortunately, in the drink which she had served, he saw or thought he saw how to treat it.

He gestured again. "I never cared for scenes. But this house, which it has pleased you to describe from your knowledge of other establishments, is——"

Whatever he may have intended to add, was interrupted. Cassy, previously inexorable as fate, but converted then into a fury, dropped the bundle and caught up the vase. Missing him, it hit the door, where musically it crashed and shattered.

He turned, looked at it, looked at her, at the table. Barring the gold-backed brushes, the jade platter and that bundle, there was nothing that she could conveniently shy, and, in his Oxford voice, but civilly enough, he gave it to her.

"Allow me. There is no necessity whatever for your acting in this manner. The situation, such as it is, it had been my intention to remedy. It had been my intention, I say. But yesterday it came to my knowledge that it is because of your relations with Lennox that his engagement is broken."

Take that, he mentally added and continued aloud: "I might not have believed the story, but I was told that Lennox admitted it." Take that, too, he mentally

resumed. I shall be treated to tears in a minute and in no time it will be "Kamerad!"

Sidewise he looked at the ruin of the vase, on which Daughters of Heaven and an ablated dynasty may have warmed their eyes. It affronted his own. Insult, yes, that could be tossed about, but not art, not at least the relatively unique.

With a crease in his lips which now were dry no longer, he looked at Cassy. The awaited tears were not yet visible. But the blood-madness that had seized her, must have let her go, routed, as hæmatomania may be, by the trivial and, in this instance, by a lie. That lie suffocated her. It was as though, suddenly, she had been garroted.

The condition was only momentary, but, during it, a curtain fell on this vulgar drama, which was to affect so many lives. Before the girl a panorama passed. She saw herself leaving Lennox' rooms. She saw Margaret Austen, saw the woman with her, saw the former's candid eyes; saw the latter's ridiculous airs, saw the construction which between them they had reached and saw, too, the consequences that had resulted. The dirt with which she had been besplattered she did not see. The panorama did not display it. What it alone revealed was Lennox' disaster. Of herself she did not think and regarding Margaret she did not care. That which occupied her was Lennox.

But was it true? In Paliser nothing was true, not even his lies. For it was unaccountable that a matter so simple could not have been cleared with a word. But it was not unaccountable at all. It was obvious. Margaret, a born snob, had given Lennox no chance for that word. Some one, Paliser probably, had in-

vented the admission and she had refused to see him, after condemning him unheard.

I will attend to that, Cassy decided.

At once the suffocation ceased, the panorama sank, the scene shifted, the curtain parted, the drama proceeded and she found herself staring at Paliser, who was staring at her.

"As it is——" he tentatively resumed and would have said more, a lot, anything to coerce the tears to her eyes and with them surrender.

She gave him no chance. She took the bundle and, before he could continue, she passed him, opened the door, slammed it with a din that had in it the clatter of muskets, went down the stair and out to the perron, before which stood a car.

"The station!" she threw at the mechanician.

The house now, jarred a moment earlier by the crash of porcelain and the slamming door, had recovered its silence.

From within, Emma, very agreeably intrigued, a footman with a white sensual face beside her, looked out with slanting eyes.

XXV

HARRIS, wrinkled as a sweetbread and thin as an umbrella, blinked at Cassy. "Mr. Lennox is out, mem."

"Then go and fetch him."

Past the servant, Cassy forced her way through the vestibule, into the sitting-room, where the usual gloom abided, but where, unusually, were a smell of camphor, two overcoats, two trunks and a bag.

Cassy, putting down the bundle, exclaimed at them. "He is not leaving town?"

"Yes, mem, to-morrow morning, for Mineola." He spoke grudgingly, looking as he spoke like a little old mule at bay.

Cassy, noticing that, said: "See here, I don't mean to bully you, but it is most important that I should see Mr. Lennox—important for him, do you hear?"

"I hear you, mem, but I don't know where he is."

"Then find out. There must be a telephone."

Harris scratched his head but otherwise he did nothing.

"Come!" Cassy told him. "Hurry!"

Harris shifted. "I don't know as how he'd like it. He's been that upset these last few days. I——" He hesitated. Visibly an idea had visited him with which he was grappling. "You're not from Miss Austen, now, are you?"

Cassy caught at it. To confirm it would be fanciful.

To deny it would be extravagant. Choosing an in-between for the benefit of this servant whom she knew to be English, she produced it.

"I am the Viscountess of Casa-Evora."

Harris wiped his mouth. A viscountess who had come only the other day with a bundle, and who now forced her way in with another bundle, did not coincide with such knowledge as he had of the nobility. But she was certainly overbearing enough to be anybody.

He turned. "Very good, your ladyship, I'll telephone."

Don't ladyship me, Cassy was about to reply, but judging that impolitic, she sat down.

On the train in she had debated whether she would go first to Harlem or to Lennox and in either case what afterward she should do. She had a few dollars which her father would need. The thought of these assets reminded her that in changing her clothes she had omitted to change back into her own stockings. Well, when she changed again she would return the pair which she had on and, as she determined on that, she saw Paliser's face as she had seen it when she threw the vase. That relapse into the primitive shamed her. She had behaved like a fish-wife. But though she regretted the violence, she regretted even more deeply the vase. The destruction of art is so despicably Hun! For moxa, she evoked the Grantly masquerade.

The entire lack of art in that seemed to her incongruous with the surface Paliser whom she had known. But had she even known the surface which itself was a mask? Yet behind the mask was an intelligence which at least was not ordinary, yet which, none the

less, had descended to that! She could not understand it. She could not understand, what some one later explained to her, that a high order of intellect does not of itself prevent a man from soiling it and, with it, himself and his hands. The explanation came later, when other matters were occupying her and when Paliser, headlined in the papers, was dead.

Meanwhile the train had landed her in the Grand Central and she decided to go to Lennox first.

Now as she sat in his sitting-room where, for all she knew, she might have to sit for hours, it comforted her to think that she had so decided. If she had put it off until the morrow, Lennox would, by then, have gone to the aviation-field, where he might be killed before she could patch things up. At thought of that, she wondered whether he might not stay out undiscoverably all night and send for his things to be fetched to the station.

But in that case, Cassy promptly reflected, I'll go to her, pull her out of bed, drag her there—and no thanks either. I didn't do it for you, I did it for him. He's too good for you.

On the mantel, a clock struck, while thinly, through a lateral entrance, Harris emerged.

"The hall-porter at Mr. Lennox' club says he's just gone out with Mr. Jones. Yes, ma'am."

"Mr. Jones! What Mr. Jones? The novelist?"

"I'm thinking so, ma'am. A very haffable gentleman."

"Try to get him. Ask if Mr. Lennox is there. Or, no, I'll do the talking."

Then presently she was doing it, collaborating rather in the dialogue that ensued.

"Mr. Jones?"

"Yes, darling."

Cassy, swallowing it, resumed: "Mr. Jones, forgive a stranger for intruding, I——"

"Beautiful voice, forgive me. Triple brute that I am, I thought it was my aunt."

"Then let me introduce myself. This is Miss Cara."

"Casta diva! You do me infinite honour!"

"Mr. Jones, I must see Mr. Lennox. It is a matter of life and death."

"Lennox is engaged with death now."

"What!"

"He is preparing for the great adventure. At this moment he is making his will. Miss Cara?"

"Yes?"

"Lennox takes even serious matters gravely."

"But he is with you?"

"In my workshop and at your service as I am."

"You will let me come there?"

"Enthusiastically and yet with all humility for I have no red carpet to run down the stair."

"Then hold on to him, please."

Ouf! sighed Cassy, as she hung it up. Another man who might be Mrs. Yallum's husband! She took the telephone-book, found and memorised the address and turned to Harris. "Thank you very much. Will you mind giving me that package?"

"Beg pardon, ma'am," the little man said, as he opened the door for her. "There's nothing more amiss, is there?"

Cassy covered him with her lovely eyes. "When Mr. Lennox comes back here, he may tell you to unpack."

"Then may God bless your ladyship."

Cassy went on.

At Jones' shop, a floor in a reconstructed private house, a man who had the air of performing a feat, showed her into a room that was summarily, but not spartanly, furnished. On one side was a bookcase supported by caryatides. Above, hung a stretch of silk on which was a flight of dragons. Above the silk was an ivory mask. Fronting the bookcase was the biggest table that Cassy had ever seen.

Jones, vacating the table, advanced to greet her. Perched on his shoulder, was a cat that peered at her. It had long hair, the colour of smoke; a bushy tail; the eyes of an angel and a ferocious moustache.

Although Cassy had other matters in hand, she exclaimed at it. "What a duck!"

Jones, who saw, and at once, that she had not come to ask the time of day, exclaimed also: "Yes, but ducky is as ducky does. That cat talks in her sleep."

But now Lennox, advancing too, had taken her hand.

Withdrawing it, she put the bundle on the table, on which were papers, and, noticeably, a dagger, brilliant, wicked, thin as a shadow. On the blade was a promise—Penetrabo.

She looked up. Jones and the cat had gone. She looked at Lennox. "I don't know where to begin."

Lennox could not tell her. On learning that she wanted to see him, he had supposed it was about her father and he had said as much to Jones. But in greeting her, the novelist knew from her vibrations that whatever her object might be, at least it was not ordinary. Then, taking the cat, he had gone.

Now, though, Cassy was at it. "The day you loaned me a hundred, you remember? As I went out I had the money in my hand. In the hall was Miss

Austen. You had just shown me her picture. I recognised her at once. With her was a woman, thin-faced, thin-lipped, thin-minded. She saw me, saw the money, gave me a look. I did not forget it. But it is only to-day that I learned what it meant. It meant that I am no better than I ought to be—or you either.”

Lennox had one hand on the table. He raised the other. “Who told you this?”

“Paliser. He said it was the reason your engagement was broken.”

In the palm of the upraised hand, the fingers moved forward and back, regularly, methodically, mechanically. Lennox was unaware of it. He was unaware of anything except the monstrous perversity of the tale.

“I came directly from him to your rooms. Your man said you were going away. Thank goodness, I am not too late.”

Cassy had seated herself, but now, reaching for the bundle, she stood up. Across the street, in the house opposite, a boy was lowering a shade. It seemed to Cassy that she had raised one. But there are explanations that explain nothing. To Lennox there was a shade suspended before Margaret, who had judged him unheard. It obscured her. He could not see her at all.

Over the way, the boy lowered a second shade and Cassy, as though prompted by it, raised another. “Paliser said you admitted it.”

From the obscurity Lennox turned, but it was still about him. “Admitted what?”

Cassy reddened. “What I told you.”

With the movement of the head that a bull has when he is going for you, Lennox bent his own. The movement, which was involuntary, was momentary. The shade had lifted. He saw Margaret, but behind

her he saw others holding her back, telling her he was not fit to be spoken to. He was going for them. Meanwhile he had forgotten Cassy. He looked up, saw her, remembered the part attributed to her in the story and struck the table.

"It is damnable that such a thing should be said of you."

"Oh," Cassy put in. "It was not at all on my account that I told you. I——" She stopped short. The promised horsewhipping occurred to her.

Lennox took up the knife, gave it a turn, shoved it away. It was very much as though he had twisted it in somebody's gizzards. The idea had come to him that Paliser had concocted the admission. But, as he was unable to conceive what his object could be, he dismissed it. None the less, for what the man had said, he deserved to be booted down the club steps.

Cassy had stopped short. The story behind the story did not concern Lennox, yet as he might wonder how Paliser had ventured with her on such a subject, she began at it again.

"We were married recently, or anyway I thought so. To-day I discovered that the ceremony was bogus. Then I told him a thing or two and he told me that."

Lennox stared. Angry already, angry ever since the rupture, angry with that intensity of anger which only those who love—or who think they do—and who are thwarted in it ever know, and all the angrier because he had no one and could have no one to vent it on, until he got to the front and got at the Huns, at that last fillip from Cassy he saw some one on whom he could vent it, and yet to whom none the less he felt strangely grateful. For, whatever Paliser had done

or omitted, at any rate, he had completely clarified the situation.

"I must run," said Cassy. "But you can tell Miss Austen, can't you?"

Lennox, controlling himself, motioned. "Would you mind repeating this to Jones?"

Cassy's eyebrows arched themselves. "It was hard enough to tell you. Were it not for your engagement, I wouldn't have said anything. When dreadful things happen to a girl, people always think that she must be dreadful herself. Isn't that nice of them? I——"

"See here," Lennox interrupted, "you can't leave it like this. Something has got to be done. I can give Paliser a hiding and I will. But that isn't enough. I don't know whether a criminal action will lie, but I do know that you can get damages and heavy ones."

Cassy's lovely eyes searched the room. "Who was that speaking? It wasn't you, was it?"

Lennox, recognising the rebuke, acknowledged it. "Forgive me. I forgot whom I was addressing. Jones will be less stupid. Let us have him in."

But when Jones, immediately requisitioned, appeared, Cassy again putting down her bundle, protested. "Mr. Lennox regards me as an Ariadne and expects me to act like a young lady in a department-store. Either rôle is too up-stage."

Jones, taken with her mobile mouth, her lovely eyes, the oval of her handsome face, said lightly: "It seems to me that you might assume any part."

Lennox struck out. "Paliser hocuspocused her with a fake marriage. He——"

"Oh," Cassy gently put in, "I have no one to blame but myself. I ought to have known better."

Jones nodded. "Probably you did know. The mis-

adventure is rare of which we are not warned in advance. We cannot see the future but the future sees us. It sends us messages which we call premonitions."

Instantly Cassy was back in the Tamburini's room, where she had seen both beauty and horror. She had not reached the latter yet and the sudden vision Lennox dissipated.

"Stuff and nonsense! Haven't you anything else to say?"

Amiably Jones turned to him. "I can say that no one is wise on an empty stomach." He turned to Cassy. "The Splendor is not far. Will you dine with us, Mrs. Paliser?"

Violently Lennox repeated it; "Mrs. Paliser! Miss Cara is no more Mrs. Paliser than you are."

"To err is highly literary," Jones with great meekness replied. "I hear that it is even human."

Cassy reached again for the bundle. "It is only natural. If I had been told in advance, I could not have believed it. I could not have believed that mock marriages occur anywhere except in cheap fiction. But we live and unlearn. Now I must run."

Lennox took her hand. "I owe you a debt. Count on me."

He spoke gravely and the gravity of it, the force that he exhaled, comforted Cassy's bruised little heart and the comfort, the first that she had had, made her lip twitch. None of that, though! Reacting she rallied and smiled.

"Good-bye—and good luck!"

Jones saw her to the door, followed her out, followed her down to the street, where for a moment he detained her.

"Just a word, if you don't mind. You have been

abominably treated and you seek no revenge. That is very fine. You have been abominably treated and you bear no malice. That is superior. You have been abominably treated and you accept it with a smile. That is alchemy. It is only a noble nature that can extract the beautiful from the base. Where do you live?"

At the change of key Cassy laughed but she told him. "Good-bye," she added. "My love to your cat."

She passed on into the sunset. The bundle seemed heavy now, but her heart was lighter. She had got it off, Lennox knew, presently a young woman would be informed and though she could not be expected to dance at the wedding, yet, after all——

The Park took her.

XXVI

WHEN Cassy had gone, Jones went back to his rooms. He went absently, his mind not on her story, which was old as the Palisades, but on a situation, entirely new, which it had suggested.

"Nice girl," he remarked as he re-entered the workshop. "Suppose we go and have dinner."

Sombrely Lennox looked up. At the table where he sat, he had been fingering some papers. He threw them down.

"I am going to have a word with Paliser."

Jones cocked an eye at him. "See here, you are not a knight-errant. The age of chivalry is over." The novelist paused and exclaimed: "What am I saying! The age of chivalry is not over. It can't be. Last night, Verelst dined with a monster!"

Lennox pushed at the papers. "If I were alone concerned, I would thank Paliser. He has done me a good turn. He has set me straight."

Then, to the listening novelist, who later found the story very useful, Lennox repeated Cassy's version of the rhyme and reason of the broken engagement.

The tale of it concluded, Lennox flicked at a speck. "I am grateful to Paliser for that, but for the manner in which he treated her, I shall have a word with him. Just one."

Jones sat down. "A word, eh? Well, why not? Flipping a man in the face with a glove was fashion-

able in the days of Charles II. Tweaking the nose was Georgian. The horsewhip went out with Victoria. Posting your man was always rather coffee-house and a rough-and-tumble very hooligan. If I were you, which I am not, but if I were, I would adopt contemporaneous methods. To-day we just sit about and backbite. That is progress. Let me commend it to you."

With a wide movement, Lennox swept the papers, shoved them into a pocket and stood up.

Jones also stood up. "Got an appetite? Well, dining has the great disadvantage of taking it away. Come along."

Lennox put on his hat. "I am going first to Park Avenue."

No you're not, thought Jones, who, with an agility which for him was phenomenal, hurried to the door and backed against it.

Lennox motioned him aside.

Jones, without budging, lied. "They're out of town." It was very imbecile. He knew it was, knew, too, that Lennox knew it, and, for the imbecile lie, he substituted another. "I mean they are dining out."

"What the devil are you driving at?" Lennox asked, and not very civilly either.

"A windmill, I suppose. You look like one. I——"

Jones broke off. The expression on Lennox' face arrested him. The attempt at interference, the stupid evasions, the conviction which these things produced, that there was something behind them, something secreted, something about Margaret that Jones knew and which he was concealing, made him livid.

"Out with it."

Jones looked at him, looked away, adjusted his neck-

cloth, vacated the door, crossed the room and sat down. He did not know to what saint to vow himself. But realising that it was all very useless, that everything is, except such solicitude as one pilgrim may show to another, and that, anyway, Lennox would soon hear it, he gave it to him.

"She is engaged to Paliser."

Lennox, who was approaching, stopped short. "Miss Austen is?"

Jones nodded.

"To Paliser?"

But it seemed too rough and, to take the edge off, Jones added. "It may not be true."

"How did you hear?"

"Verelst told me. He dined there last night."

Lennox turned on his heel. Futilely in that hell to which one may look back and see that it was not hell but purgatory prior to paradise, futilely there he had sought the reason of his damnation. A few minutes before he had thought that Cassy's story revealed it. In the light of it he had seen himself condemned, as many another has been, for crimes which he had not committed. But he had seen, too, the order of release. He had only a word to say. He was going to Park Avenue to say it.

When Jones was below with Cassy so he had thought and not without gratitude to Paliser either. If the cad had held his tongue, enlightenment might have been withheld until to his spirit, freed perhaps in Flanders, had come the revelation. Personally he was therefore grateful to Paliser. But vicariously he was bitter. For his treatment of that girl, punishment should follow.

That girl! Obscurely, in the laboratory of the

senses where, without our knowledge, often against our will, our impulses are dictated, a process, intricate and interesting, which Stendhal called crystallisation, was at work.

Unaware of that, conscious only of the moment, to his face had come the look and menace of the wolf.

Now——!

“There is a book over there,” Jones, who was watching him, cut in. “It is Seneca’s ‘*De animæ tranquillitate*.’ Take a peek at it. It will tell you, what it has told me, that whatever happens, happens because it had to happen and because it could not happen otherwise. There is no sounder lesson in mental tranquillity.”

But for all Lennox heard of that he might then have been dead. Without knowing what he was doing, he sat down. Paliser, Margaret! Margaret, Paliser! Before him, on encephalic films, their forms and faces moved as clearly as though both were in the room. He saw them approaching, saw them embrace. The obsession of jealousy that creates the image, projected it. He closed his eyes, covered his face with his hands. The image got behind them. It persisted but less insistently. The figures were still there. It was their consistence that seemed to fade. Where they had been were shadows—evil, shallow, malign, perverse, lurid as torches and yet but shades. For the jealousy that inflames love can also consume it and, when it does, it leaves ashes that are either sterile with indifference or potent with hate. At the shadows that were torches Lennox looked with closed eyes. Obscurely, without his knowledge, in the laboratory of his senses, crystallisation was at work.

Jones, leaning forward, touched him. "I say, old chap!"

Lennox had been far away, on a journey from which some men return, but never as they went. At Jones' touch he dropped his hands. The innate sentiment of form repossessed him. He straightened, looked about and, after the manner of the deeply pre-occupied, who answer a question ten minutes after it is put, said evenly:

"Suppose we do."

Do what? But Jones, getting it at once, stood up. "Come along, then."

On the way to the neighbourly Athenæum, the novelist talked endlessly about the disadvantages of not being born, which is a very safe subject. Talking still, he piloted Lennox to the dining-room where, the advantages of sedatives occurring to him, he ordered a bottle of Pommard, which is mother's milk.

But when it was brought Lennox would not touch it. He wanted brandy and soda and told Johnson, a captain, to see to it.

In the great high-ceiled room, other members were dining. From one of the tables Ogston sauntered over and, noting that Jones and Lennox had not dressed, which he had, and very beautifully, remarked brilliantly: "You fellers aren't going to the opera, are you? It's the last night."

It was another safe subject and Jones smiled falsely at him. "But you are, eh? Sit down."

Ogston put a hand on the novelist's chair. "No. I'm off to a theatre-party. But I have a ticket for the Metropolitan. You don't either of you want it, do you?"

"Let me see, what is it, to-night?" Jones, with

that same false smile, enquired. "And where is the seat?"

"In Paliser's box. He's to be alone and left it here with a note asking me to join him."

Deeply, beneath his breath, Jones swore, but with the same smile, he tried to shift the subject. "You're quite a belle, aren't you?"

"See here, Ogston," Lennox put in, "let me have it."

Ogston, fumbling in his white waistcoat, extracted the ticket and handed it over.

"By the way, Lennox, do you mind my doing a little touting for Cantillon? He's with Dunwoodie. Give him your law business—some of it, anyhow."

"I'll give him some, when I have it," answered Lennox, who was to have some, and sooner and far more monumentally, than either he, or even Jones, suspected.

"Good for you, Lennox. Good-night, Jones." The brilliant and beautifully dressed young man nodded and passed on.

But now the captain was bearing down on them.

Jones looked at Lennox. "You will have to come back to my shop after dinner. There is a phrase in your will that I omitted. I forgot the 'seized and possessed.'"

Lennox drank before he spoke. Then he said: "After dinner, I shall do for Paliser."

Jones, waiting until the captain had gone, looked at Lennox again. "The greatest revenge is the disdain of any."

Lennox made no reply. A waiter put a plate before him and another before Jones. Members passed, going to their tables or leaving them. Occasionally one of them stopped, exchanged the time of day and

then passed on. In each exchange Jones collaborated. Lennox said nothing. The food before him he tormented, poking at it with a fork, but not eating it.

Presently he asked for coffee, drank a cup and got up.

Jones, too, got up and, to stay him, put out a hand.

Lennox, treating it, and him, like a cobweb, went on.

Afterward, Jones thought of the Wild Women of whom Æschylus tells, the terrible Daughters of Hazard that lurk in the shadows of coming events which, it may be, they have marshalled.

Afterward he thought of them. But at the moment, believing that Lennox would do nothing and realising that, in any case, nothing can be more futile than an attempt to avert the inevitable, he was about to resume his seat, when something on the floor attracted him. He bent over, took it, looked at it and tucked it in a pocket.

Then, sitting down again, mentally he followed Lennox, whom later he was to follow farther, whom he was to follow deep in the depths where the Wild Women, lurking in wait, had thrown him.

XXVII

THE Park that had taken Cassy and from which, at that hour, children and nursemaids had gone, was green, fragrant, quiet. Its odorous peace enveloped the girl who had wanted to cry. In hurrying on she had choked it back. But you cannot always have your way with yourself. The tears would come and she sat down on a bench, from behind which a squirrel darted.

Before her the grass departed, the trees disappeared, the path wound into nothingness. In their place was the empty vastness that sorrow is. The masquerade that had affected her physically, had affected her psychically and in each instance profoundly. It had first sickened and then stabbed. There had been no place for sorrow in the double assault. There had been no time for it either. Occupied as she had almost at once become with the misadventures of another, she had no opportunity to consider her own. Yet now the aspect that sorrow took was not that of disaster. What it showed was the loneliness of the soul, solitary as it ever is in that desert which, sooner or later, we all must cross. Vast, arid, empty, before her it stretched.

Nearby, on the bench, crouching there, eager, anxious, wary, a squirrel, its fluffy tail and tiny nostrils aquiver, watched her with eyes of bead. From the desert she turned and seeing the little gracious thing, stretched her hand. She would have liked to

take it and pet it. It would have made her solitude less acute. At the movement, a ball of misty fur bounded. Where it had been, there was air.

The abrupt evaporation distracted her. Before her the desert lay, but in it now was her father. She had been going to him. Previously, she had thought that, when she did go, her hands would be filled with gifts. Instead they were bruised, bare to the bone. They would madden him and she wondered whether she could endure it. The long, green afternoon, that had been so brief, had been so torturesome that she doubted her ability. But he would have to be told. She could not lie to him and humanly she wished that it were to-morrow, the day after, the day after that, when it would be over and done for, put away, covered by woes of his own, though inevitably to be dragged out again and shown her, and shown her, too, with the unconscious cruelty that those who love you display.

It would be crucifying, but there was no help for it. Reaching for the bundle, she stood up and went her way, across the Park, to the subway, from which she got out in Harlem.

The loveliness of that land of love seemed to have changed, though the change, she then recognised, was in herself. But at least the walk-up was unaltered. In the grimy entrance was Mrs. Yallum, a fat Finn, who looked like a dirty horse, and who yapped at her volubly, incomprehensibly, but with such affection that Cassy, yapping back, felt less lonely as she ascended the stair.

The comfort was mediocre. In the afternoon she had gone from a ruin. Now she had the sensation of entering another, one from which she had also gone, but to which she was returning and with a spirit so

dulled in the journey! Had she, she wondered, any spirit left at all? At least enough remained to prevent any wish for the reconstruction of the ruin behind her. About the fallen walls were forms of filth; in the crevices there were vermin, and though, before her, the desert stretched, it was clean. However arid, it was wholesome.

But now she was at the door. She let herself in, hurried to the living-room, where, with the feigned cheerfulness of the unselfish, she beamed at her father and bent over him.

"Here I am to look after you again! How well you look. I am so glad and oh! where is your sling?"

In speaking she stroked him. His skin was clearer, she thought, and the abandoned sling was a relief.

He looked up at her. "You got married without me. I ought to have been there. Why didn't you tell me? It was for me to give you away. Who did?"

"Who did what?"

"Who gave you in marriage?"

With the mimic of gaiety, Cassy laughed. "Why, you old dear, all that has gone out. Hereabouts, nowadays, a father never goes to a wedding—only to funerals."

She paused and, with the idea of breaking it to him in bits, resumed: "Besides, it was all done in a hurry, in too much of a hurry."

He took it in, but at the wrong end. "Sick of him already, eh? Well, it isn't because I did not warn you. Where is he?"

Cassy moved back. Should she give it to him then or later? But the question, repeating itself, followed her.

"Where is your husband?"

Now for it, she thought. But at once he switched. "There was nothing in the papers. Why is that? What is that package?"

Cassy looked at the bundle which she still held. It gave her courage.

"I am not married."

For a second he stared. It was obvious that he had not got it. "Where have you been, then?"

Cassy fingered the bundle. Always she had hated to explain and of all possible explanations what could be more hateful than this? If only he would guess it, flare up, stamp about, get it over, let it go. But the cup was there and she drank it.

"I thought I was married. I am a fool."

For the awaited curse, she braced herself. The explosion did not come, but his eyes had widened. They covered her. Then, with an intake of the breath and of understanding, he lowered them. Apparently he was weighing it and Cassy thought he was trying to restrain himself, and she blessed him for it. It was less terrible than she had feared. But immediately it occurred to her that instead of trying to restrain himself, he was seeking the strength wherewith to rend her. And I am so innocent, she despairfully thought.

Her eyes were upon him and he looked up into hers.

"Why did you think you were married?"

"I told you, because I am a fool. There was a clergyman and a ceremony. Afterwards I found that the clergyman was not a clergyman and that the ceremony was a sham."

"When was that?"

"This afternoon."

"What did you do?"

"What was there for me to do? I left him."

"Where is he now?"

Cassy put down the bundle. She had no idea. But she said: "This evening we were to go to the opera. I hardly fancy he will miss it on my account." She paused and with a little catch in her voice continued: "I know it is all my fault, I ought to have known better and I shall be so unhappy if you mind. Won't you try not to?"

As she spoke, he stood up and she thought that the delayed volcano of his wrath was about to burst. To smother it, she touched him. "Of course you will mind. But I would not have been such a fool if I had not believed that everything would be so much nicer for you. Can't you see that and, if you do, can't you forgive me?"

He had moved from her to the piano; there he turned and looked. "There is nothing to forgive, Cassy. You have been a good girl always. I am sorry, of course I am sorry, but you are not to blame."

Understanding instead of maledictions! Sympathy in lieu of abuse! Such things are affecting. The tears swam to her eyes and wretchedly and yet thankfully she wept.

He did not seem to notice. In the narrow space he was moving about, shifting things on the piano, displacing and replacing a score, which, finally, he let fall. He stooped for it. As he raised it, Cassy saw through her tears that his hand was shaking. He, too, may have seen it. He left the room and she heard him pottering in the kitchen.

She wiped her eyes. Across the court was another kitchen in which were a woman and a child. Often she had seen them there, but if she had seen them else-

where she would not have recognised them. They were but forms, the perceptions of a perceiver, and though Cassy had never read Fichte and was unacquainted with Berkeley, the idea visited her that they had no real existence, that, it might be, she had none either, that all she had endured was a dream drifting by, with nothing past which to drift.

It was her father's attitude that had induced these metaphysical hysterics. She had expected that some demon within him would spring out and gibber. Instead of which he had told her, and so gently, that she was not to blame. It is words like these that bring tears swiftest. The tears had come, but the words had also sufficed to reduce the people across the way into baseless appearances, in which, for the moment, she included herself.

But now at least her father was actual. He was coming in with glasses and a bottle which he put on the table.

"You are tired," he said. "Have a little."

Seating himself, he drank and Cassy feared that if the liquor exerted the authority that liquor has, he might go back into it and exact from her details which it would revolt her to supply. In helping himself, he had poured a glass for her. She did not want it. What she wanted was bed and the blanket of long, dreamless sleep. It could not be too long. She was tired, as he had said, but more so than he knew, tired with the immense fatigue that emotions and their crises create.

She moved over to where he sat. Several minutes had gone since he spoke yet it seemed to her but the moment before.

"Yes, I am tired, but you're a good daddy and I love you."

She bent over him, went to the kitchen, got a glass of milk and a biscuit, which she carried to her room, where she opened the window and closed the door.

Long later, when she awoke, it was with the consciousness of something there, something waiting, something evil, something that had jeered and pummelled her in her sleep. But what? Then, instantly, she knew. A palace of falsehoods had tumbled about her and the lies had laughed and bruised her as they fell. They had been laughing and falling the whole night through.

The light distracted her. In the morning, because of the building opposite, her room was dark. Now it was bright. The sun had scaled the roof. A gleam looked in and told her it was noon.

How could I have slept so long? she wondered. She put some things on and opening the door smelled coffee. The poor dear! she thought, he had to make it himself.

She went on into the living-room. There her father sat. On the table before him was a paper.

Without speaking he pointed at a headline. The letters squirmed. They leaped and sprang at her. From before them she backed. But what nonsense! It was impossible. She could not believe it. Yet there it was! Abruptly there also was something else. An electric chair, the man of all men in it!

From before the horror of that she reeled, steadied herself, looked at her father, looked without seeing him.

"God of gods! And I did it!"

XXVIII

IN high red boots, wide purple breeches and a yellow mandarin jacket, Jones entered the workshop.

His appearance did not alarm him. He was invisible. Lloyd George and Clémenceau might have called. Mr. Ten Eyck Jones was not at home, sir. If necessary he was dead. Always, while he dressed, his servant put, unseen, a tray on the workshop table and, still unseen, disappeared. With the tray was the morning paper and the usual letters, which Jones never read. Morning in the workshop meant work. No interruptions permitted. On one occasion the house got on fire. His servant did not venture to tell him, though the firemen did. Apart from such outrages, necessarily infrequent, the only intrusion was the morning paper and the cat that talked in her sleep. The cat had many privileges, the paper had few. Sometimes it was briefly considered, more often it was not even looked at, but its great privilege consisted in being stacked.

On this morning Jones did look, but quite involuntarily, and only because a headline caught his eye. It was the same headline from before which Cassy backed. The leaping words shouted at the girl. They shouted at the novelist, a circumstance which did not prevent him from breakfasting.

The fruit, the crescents, the coffee he consumed, not as was customary, with his thoughts on his own

copy, but on that which the paper supplied. It was very colourful. At the opera, the night before, Monty Paliser had been killed.

In New York, many men are killed, but not so many are murdered and of those that are murdered, few are millionaires and fewer still have a box at the Metropolitan, where, apart from stage business, no one up to then had been done for. The case was therefore unique and, save for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, without a parallel. In the circumstances, the leaded line of leaping words was justified.

According to the story that followed and which, Jones realised, must have reached the city editor just as the paper was going to press, an attendant, whose duty it was to visit the boxes after the performance and see what, if anything, the occupants had forgotten, had, on entering Paliser's box, found him at the back of it, unconscious, on the floor. There were no external marks of violence, but a commandeered physician pronounced him dead and, on examination, further pronounced that death was due to internal hemorrhage, superinduced by heart-puncture, which itself had been caused by some instrument, presumably a stiletto.

A picturesque detail followed. The box at the right was owned by the Leroy Thompsons. The box at the left was the Harriwells'. At the late hour, an attempt to communicate with the former had failed, but over the wire, Mr. Legrand Harriwell stated that the deceased had come in during the third act, that he had spoken to Mrs. Harriwell, after which he had moved back and had either gone, or remained in the rear of the box. Mr. Harriwell knew nothing else, he had been unaware of anything occurring, he was

not in the habit of spying about and he wished it distinctly understood that he must not be mixed up in the matter, or Mrs. Harriwell either.

The dear thing! thought Jones, who saw him, a tall, thin-lipped beast of a brute, with a haw-haw manner and an arrogant air. God bless him!

But, Jones resumed to himself, voyons! The opera was *Aïda*. Paliser came in during the third act. The house then is brilliant. But during the fourth—the duo in the crypt—it is dark. It was then that he was done for and with what is assumed to have been a stiletto.

To cut out the account, Jones turned in search of a dagger, long, thin, wicked, which, one adventurous night in Naples, he had found—just in time—in his back. On the blade was inscribed a promise, *Penetrabo*. Now his eyes roamed the table. He lifted the tray, lifted his copy, looked on the floor. Yet only the evening before, when Lennox was there and Cassy Cara had come, he had seen it. Since then it had gone.

The disappearance did not disturb him. Occasionally, in hunting for an object, he found it in his hand. It is somewhere, he cogently reflected and, taking a pencil, set to work.

But the muse was timorous as a chicken. The metaphor is entirely metaphorical. Jones had no faith in the wanton. He believed in regular hours, in silence and no interruptions. No intrusions of any kind. A letter was an intrusion, so also was the news of the day. These things he considered, when he did consider them, after his work was done. Sometimes he ignored them entirely. Usually he had a bushel of letters that he had not opened, a bale of papers at

which he had not looked. Of such is the life known as literary or, at any rate, such was the life led by Jones.

On this morning, his copy, ordinarily fluent enough, would not come. Ideas fluttered away just out of reach. The sequence of a chapter had been in his head. Like the dagger, it had gone. He could not account for that disappearance, nor did he try. It would turn up again. So, ultimately, would the ousted sequence. For the latter's departure he did not try to account either. The effort was needless. He knew. An interruption had occurred. The news of the day had intruded itself upon him. A headline had entangled his thoughts.

Abandoning the pencil, he lit a cigarette. Across the room, above the bookcase, was a stretch of silk, a flight of dragons that he had got in Rangoon. Above the silk was an ivory mask, the spoil of a sarcophagus, which he had found in Seville. He looked at them. The dragons fled on, the mask fell asleep. Something else took their place.

On the wall was the scene at the opera.

In the golden gloom of the darkened house, it showed Paliser, sitting back in his box, presumably enjoying the *Terra addio*, for which Caruso had, as usual, been saving himself. Without, in the corridor, a figure furtively peering at the names on the doors. Then the voice of the soprano blending with that of the tenor and, during the divine duo, the door of the box opening, letting in a thread of light; Paliser turning to look and beholding that figure and a hand which, instantly descending, deepened the gloom forever.

It was certainly *Terra addio*, Jones reflected. Cer-

tainly, too, the scene is easy enough to reconstruct. But whose was the hand?

Flicking his ashes, he looked about and saw two hands, between which, he also saw, he was entirely free to pick and choose. One hand, slight and fragile, was Cassy Cara's. The other, firm and virile, was Lennox'.

Lennox had threatened. He had been acidly murderous. He had a motive. He had the opportunity. He knew where Paliser would be. He had been supplied with a seat in that box. The hand was his. It was a clear case. That was obvious, particularly to Jones, who regarded the obvious as very misleading.

Given the chance, he reflected, and Lennox might have done for Paliser, but he would have done for him with bare fists, never with a knife. It was not Lennox to use one. It was not Lennox at all.

Jones threw him out and pulled in Cassy Cara.

The case against her was equally clear. Presumably she owned the stiletto which a hat pin is. In addition, she also had a motive. If ever a girl had cause to up and do it, she had. Then, too, the risk was negligible. Any jury would acquit and tumble over each other to shake hands with her. For equity has justice that the law does not know. Moreover there are crimes that jurists have not codified. Some are too inhuman, others too human. Cassy's righting of her own wrongs belonged among the latter. Cassy's, that is, provided she had done it. But had she? Logically, yes. If the police could look behind the scenes, logically they would say to her, "Thou art the man."

But, Jones resumed, logic when pushed far enough becomes incoherence. The psychologist prefers vi-

sion and it would display none to believe that she did it. In the abstract, that is to be regretted. A lovely assassin! A beautiful girl slaying a recreant lover! A future prima donna killing a local millionaire! Monty Paliser murdered by the Viscountess of Casa-Evora! And at the opera! If I had ever put anything of the kind in my copy, reviewers would have indolently asked: "Why doesn't this imbecile study life?"

Jones laughed. The enjoyment of one's own ideas—or of the absence of them—is a literary trait. When Dumas wrote, he roared.

Here it is, then, Jones continued. If the police knew certain things they would nab Lennox. If they knew others, they would nab Cassy Cara. If they knew more, they would nab me. I should be held as a witness. This is cheerful, particularly as my sole complicity in the matter has been due to a desire to be of use. But that is just it. Through the enigmatic laws of life, any kindness is repaid in pain.

Pleasurably, for a moment, he considered the altruism of that aphorism. Then he got back at the murder which, he decided, must have been premeditated by some one who knew where Paliser would be. That conclusion reached, he groped for another. Lennox knew, but did Cassy know, and, if she did, had she utilised the knowledge?

To decide the point he reviewed the visit of the previous evening.

Ostensibly Cassy's visit had been occasioned not by any wish to relate what had happened to her, but to acquaint Lennox with the cause of what had happened to him. In view of what had befallen her, the proceeding was certainly considerate. In the misad-

ventures of life, the individual is usually so obsessed by his own troubles that they blind him to those of another. But ostensibly Cassy had sunk her troubles and had pulled them up, not to exhibit them, but to show Lennox the lay of the land as it affected not her at all but him. The proceeding was certainly considerate—unless it were astute, unless her object had been to employ Lennox for the wreaking of her own revenge.

That was possible, but was it probable?

An ordinary young woman would have gone at it differently, gone at it hammer and tongs. Cassy's methods were merely finer. That was the common sense view. But was it psychology? The common sense view that is applicable to the average individual is inapplicable to a problematic nature and, consequently, not to Cassy, who must therefore have had another incentive for her visit, an incentive stronger than the primitive instinct for revenge.

But, Jones asked himself, what are the fundamental principles of human activity? They are self-preservation and the perpetuation of the species. Every idea that has existed, or does exist, in the mind of man is the result of the permutations and combinations of those two principles, of which the second is the stronger and its basis is sex. That is what actuated Cassy. She is, or was, in love with Lennox, and told him for no other reason.

That is it, Jones decided. But the course of her true love could not have run very smooth and, knowing that Lennox was otherwise interested, she took up with Paliser out of pique.

Pique! he repeated. But no, that is not Cassy Cara either. She——

Like a thread snapped suddenly, the novelist's meditations ceased. On the wall before him the dragons alighted, the mask awoke. Between them a canvas was emerging. Dim, shadowy, uncertain, it hesitated, wavered, advanced.

Then, as it hung unsupported in the air—far too unsupported, he presently thought—he looked it over.

To apparitions he was accustomed. They were part of his equipment. Unsummoned, without incantations they came, sent, one might think, by the muse whom he derided, but more naturally and very simply produced by the machinery in his brain.

Now, as he examined the canvas, its imprecision diminished, the shadows passed, the obscurity lifted, the penumbra brightened, outlines defined themselves, the colouring appeared, a colouring, after the manner of Rembrandt, composed of darkness in which there is light and which, as such, reveals.

Jones stood up, turned around and sat down again as gamblers, disquieted by their luck, will do.

Before him still the picture floated. He disavowed it, disowned it. Yet there it was, the child of his fancy, the first-born of the morning, the fruit of his concentrated thought, and as, surprisedly, he considered it, it took on such semblances of legitimacy, that the disavowals ceased. Then, slowly disintegrating, its consistence lessened. It was departing, vaporously as it had come. Jones waved at it, omitting out of sheer abstraction to say *Au revoir*, yet omitting also, and through equal modesty, to say *Eureka*!

He pressed a button. Instantly, as though sprung from a trap, his servant appeared.

"Get Mr. Lennox on the telephone."

The minutes lengthened. Finally the servant reappeared.

"Mr. Lennox is not at home, sir. His man says he's gone to Centre Street. He's been arrested. Mr. Lennox has been arrested. Yes, sir."

Pausing, the servant cocked an ear and added: "They're calling extras, sir. Would you wish one?"

Circuitously, through the open door, the cat, her tail in the air, approached and wowed.

Jones leaned over and tickled her in the stomach. The cat hopped up on him. He put a finger to his forehead, held it there, removed it and looked at the man.

"In war-time, with the price of everything going up, it is a criminal waste of money to buy an extra—particularly when you know what isn't in it."

"Yes, sir."

Jones motioned. "Look through the old newspapers. Among the March issues there is one that has an article entitled 'The Matter of Ziegler.' Let me have it."

The cat, now on his shoulder, purred profusely in his ear. Raising a hand, he tickled her again.

"Mimi-Meow, this Matter of Ziegler may interest us very much and after we have looked it over, I will attend to our friend von Lennox, who seems to have become a Hun."

XXIX

ALREADY over the picked-up codfish, flapjacks, Hamburg steaks and cognate enticements on which the Bronx and Harlem breakfasts, the news of it had buttered the toast, flavoured the coffee, added a sweetness to this April day and provided a cocktail to people who did not know Paliser from the Pierrot in the moon. That he was spectacularly wealthy was a tid-bit, that he had been killed at the Metropolitan was a delight, the war news was nothing to the fact that the party with the stiletto had escaped "unknownst." These people were unacquainted with Paliser. But here was a young man with an opera-box of his own, and think of that! Here was the mythological monster that the Knickerbocker has become. Here was the heir to unearned and untold increments. These attributes made him as delectable to the majority who did not know him, as he had become to the privileged few who did.

Elsewhere, and particularly in and about fashion's final citadel which the Plaza is, solemn imbeciles viewed the matter vehemently. "Young Paliser! Why, there is no better blood in town! By Jove, I believe we are related!"

Or else: "That's M. P.'s son, isn't it? Yes, here it is. I never met the old cock but I heard of him long before we came East. A damned outrage, that's what I call it."

Or again: "Dear me, what is the world coming to? What a blessing it is we were not there. They might have come and murdered us all!"

Adjacently, in clubland, old men with one foot in the grave and the other on Broadway, exchanged reminiscences of the nights when social New York was a small and early family party and M. P. led the ball, and at a pace so klinking that he danced beyond the favours of the cotillon—the german as it, the cotillon, was then lovingly called—into assemblies, certainly less select, but certainly, too, more gay, and had horrified scrumptious sedateness with the uproar of his orgies.

The indicated obituaries followed. "Well, at any rate, they didn't murder him for it." "The son now, a chip of the old block, eh?" "Nothing of the kind, a quiet young prig." "The papers say——" "Damn the papers, they never know anything." "You mean they don't print what they do know." "I mean they don't give us the woman. For it was a woman. I'll eat my hat it was a woman." "Let's have lunch instead."

Generally, for the moment, that was the verdict, one in which the police had already collaborated. But what woman? And, assuming the woman, whence had she come? Where had she gone?—problems, momentarily insoluble but which investigations, then in progress, would probably decide.

At the great white house on upper Fifth Avenue, the servants knew only that they knew nothing. Nothing at all. Already coached, they were sure and unshakable in their knowledge of that. A Mr. Harvey—from Headquarters—could not budge them an inch. Not one!

The night before, at the first intelligence of it, M. P. came nearer to giving up the ghost than is commonly advisable. Suffocation seized him. An incubus within was pushing his life-springs out. So can emotion and an impaired digestion affect a father. The emotion was not caused by grief. It was fear. For weeks, for months, during the tedium and terror of the trial, his name, Paliser, would top the page! It had topped it before, very often, but that was years ago. Then he had not cared. Then the wine of youth still bubbled. No, he had not cared. But that was long ago. Since then the wine of youth had gone, spilled in those orgies which he had survived, yet, in the survival, abandoned more and more to solitude and making him seek, what the solitary ever do seek, inconspicuousness. For years he had courted obscurity as imbeciles court fame. And now!

If only the boy had had the decency to die of pneumonia!

It was then the incubus gripped him. For a second he saw the visage, infinitely consoling, that Death can display and possibly, but for an immediate drug, there too would have echoed the *Terra addio!*

He was then in white velvet. A preparation of menthe, dripping from a phial, spotted it green. He did not notice. At the moment the spasm had him. Then as that clicked and passed, he looked in the expressionless face of the butler who had told him.

The spasm had shaken him into a chair.

The room, an oblong, was furnished after a fashion of long ago. The daised bed was ascended by low, wide steps. Beyond stood a table of lapis-lazuli. A mantel of the same material was surmounted by a mirror framed in jasper. Beneath the mirror, a fire

burned dimly. The lights too were dim. They were diffused by tall wax candles that stood shaded in high gold sticks. On the table there were three of them.

The chair was near this table, at which M. P. had been occupied very laboriously, in doing nothing, a task that he performed in preparation for the bed, which was always ready for him, and for sleep, which seldom was. There he had been told. It had shaken him to his feet, shaken apoplexy at him and shaken him back in the chair.

Now, as he looked at the servant's wooden mask, for a moment he relived an age, not a pleasant one either and of which this blow, had he known it, was perhaps the karma. He did not know it. He knew nothing of karma. None the less, with that curious intuition which the great crises induce, he too divined the woman and wished to God that he had kept his hands off, wished that he had not interfered and told Monty to put her in a flat and be damned to her! It was she, he could have sworn it. At once, precisely as he wished he had let her alone, he hoped and quite as fervently that she had covered her tracks, that there would be no trial, nothing but inept conjectures and that forgetfulness in which all things, good and bad, lose their way.

The futility of wishing passed. The time for action had come. He motioned. "Is Benny here?"

"He left this noon, sir."

"Did he say anything?"

The butler did not know whether to lie or not, but seeing no personal advantage in either course, he hedged. "Very little, sir."

That little, the old man weighed. A little is often enough. It may be too much.

"He spoke about a girl, eh?"

"He said a lady was stopping there. Yes, sir."

"What else?"

The butler shuffled. "He said she was very pretty, sir."

"Go on, Canlon."

"Well, sir, it seems there was a joke about it. The young lady thought she was married."

"How was that?"

"I'm not supposed to know, sir. But from what was let on, Benny was rigged out as a dominie and it made 'em laugh."

The old man ran his head out like a turtle. "Damnation, what has that to do with it?"

"Why, sir, he pretended to marry her."

"Benny did?"

"Yes, sir."

"He pretended that she was his wife."

"No, sir, he pretended to marry her to Mr. Monty."

"Good God!" the old man muttered and sank back. The blackness was blacker than any black he had entered. In days gone by, he had agreeably shocked New York with the splendid uproar of his orgies. He had left undone those things which he ought to have done and done those things which he should have avoided. He had been whatever you like—or dislike—but never had he been dishonest. Little that would avail him now. If this turpitude were published, it would be said that he had fathered it. At the prospect, he felt the incubus returning. In a moment it would have him and, spillingly, he drank the green drug.

The agony receded, but the nightmare confronted him. He grappled with it.

"The coat I had on at dinner. There is a card-case in the pocket. Give it to me."

Probably it was all very useless. Probably no matter what he contrived, the police would ferret her out. There was just one chance though which, properly taken, might save the situation.

The card-case, pale damask, lined with pale silk, the man brought him. He put it on the table.

"Canlon!"

"Yes, sir."

"Benny said nothing."

"Very good, sir."

"I have a few hundred for you here, between eight and nine, I think."

"Thank you, sir."

"To-morrow there will be more."

"I am sure I am very grateful, sir."

"Don't interrupt me. Recently my son returned from Cuba. Occasionally he went visiting. Where he went, he did not tell you. That is all you know. You know nothing else. You heard nothing. Nobody here heard anything. Nobody, in this house, knows anything at all. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then see to it. The police will come. You must be at the door. You know now what to say. They will want a word with me. I am too prostrated to see anybody."

"Thank you, sir."

"Telephone to the Place. Get Benny. Repeat my orders. Say I will do as well by him as I shall by you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Take the money. You may have the case also."

"I thank you, sir."

"Tell Peters to fetch me some brandy. The 1810. That will do."

Presently, when the police did come and, several hours later, in the person of Mr. Harvey, came again, they came upon the barriers, invisible and unscalable, which ignorance, properly paid, can erect. With an empty bag, Mr. Harvey made off; not far, however, a few squares below to the Athenæum Club.

There, the hall-porter succeeded in being magnificent. The strange and early visitor he rebuked. It was not customary for members to be murdered!

A badge, carelessly disclosed, disconcerted him. For a second only. However unusual a member might be, no information could be supplied concerning him. There was another rule, equally strict. Strangers were not admitted. Though, whether the rule applied to a bull, he was uncertain. Momentarily, the hall-porter, previously magnificent, became an unhappy man. Misery is fertile. A compromise surprised him.

He crooked a thumb. "Here! Go 'round by the back way and ask for Mr. Johnson—he's one of the captains."

From the steps, in the slanting rays of the morning sun, he saw him off. But the gaiety of the eager rays that charged the air with little gold motes, did not cheer him. The lustre of his office was tarnished. A member had been murdered! It was most unusual.

Meanwhile, down the area steps, a hostile and hasty youth in shirt-sleeves and a slashed waistcoat barred the way. The barring was brief. The badge and a smile demolished it. Within, beneath a low ceiling, at a long table, other youths, equally slashed but less hostile, were at breakfast.

Affably, the intruder raised a hand. "Gentlemen,

don't let me disturb you. I'm just having a look-in on Mr. Johnson."

Mr. Johnson did not breakfast with slashed young men; it would have been subversive to discipline, and it was negligently, through a lateral entrance, that presently he appeared. In evening clothes on this early morning, he surveyed his visitor, a big fellow with a slight moustache, an easy way and a missing front tooth, who went straight at it.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Johnson. My name's Harvey. It's about young Paliser. There may be something in it for you. I'm from Headquarters."

The captain coughed. "It's awful. I can't tell you anything though. He wasn't here often. Doubt if I've seen him in a week." He looked about. The slashed youths were edging up. "Come in here."

In an adjoining room, he took a chair, waved politely at another, coughed again and resumed. "You say there may be something in it for me?"

Mr. Harvey sat down. "Cert. There'll be a reward—a big one."

The captain turned it over. "It is as much as my place is worth, but last evening one of the members was talking fierce about him."

"Yes, so I heard," said Mr. Harvey, who had heard nothing of the kind and who, not for an instant, had expected to tumble on a fierce-talking member. "I heard his name too. It's—er——"

"Lennox," the captain put in.

"Lennox, yes, that's it, and just to see how my account tallies with yours, what did he say?"

"He said he'd do for him. I could have laughed."

"It was funny, I laughed myself, and about a woman, wasn't it?"

"I don't know. But he was engaged to be married. I saw it in the papers."

"And this young Paliser butted in?"

"I couldn't say. But he threw up his business and sat around and last night he was going to do for him."

"At the opera?"

"He was talking random-like. He had just had a B. and S. I didn't hear anything about the opera. He wasn't got up for it. Just a business suit. But, Lord bless you, he didn't do it. He isn't that kind. Nice, free-handed feller."

"No, of course not. I wouldn't believe it, not if you told me so. Let me see. Where did I hear he lives?"

"I don't rightly know. Somewhere in the neighbourhood."

"So I thought and his first name is?"

"I've forgotten. Hold on! Keith! That's it. Keith Lennox. Are you going to see him? P'raps he can set you straight."

"P'raps he can."

"But don't let on about me, my friend."

"Not on your life," replied his friend, who added: "Where's your hat?"

"My hat!" Mr. Johnson surprisedly exclaimed.

Affably that friend of his nodded. "Ever been to Headquarters? Well, you're going there now!"

Then, presently, the captain and his friend ascended a stairway, down which, a few hours later, hoarse voices came.

"Extra! Extra!"

XXX

AT the Athenæum, that afternoon, members gathered together, buttonholed each other, talked it over and so importantly that, if you had not known better, you might have thought the war a minor event. It gave one rather a clear idea of the parochialism of clubland. But then, to discuss the affairs of people who never heard of you is, essentially, a social act.

Meanwhile the shouted extras had told of Lennox' arrest. The evening papers supplied the evidence.

In them you read that Lennox had said he would "do" for Paliser, that in his possession had been found a stiletto, an opera-check, together with a will, and that, when apprehended, he had been effecting what is called a getaway.

There you had the threat, the instrument, the opportunity and what more could you ask, except the motive? As for the rest, it was damning. On that point foregathering members agreed—with one exception.

In a seated group was Jones. His neighbours alarmed him. They belonged, he thought, to a very dangerous class, to a class which a sociologist defined as the most dangerous of all—to the stupid. According to them, Lennox was not merely guilty, he was worse. He had besplattered the club with the blood of a man who, hang it all, whether you liked him or not, was also a member. The Athenæum would be-

come a byword. Already, no doubt, it was known as the Assassin's. Et cetera and so forth.

The group thinned, increased, thinned again, scattered.

Jones, alone with a survivor, addressed him. "How is my handsome friend to-day?"

Verelst turned impatiently. "In no mood for jesting. I ought to have hurried him off. Now he is in jail."

Jones lit a cigarette. "There are honest men everywhere, even in jail, perhaps particularly in jail. Whom has he, do you know?"

"To defend him? Dunwoodie. Ogston told me. Ogston says——"

"I daresay he does. His remarks are always very poignant."

"But look here. Before the arrest was known, Ogston was in this room telling everybody that, last night, he gave Lennox a seat in Paliser's box. He will have to testify to it. He can't help himself."

"Perhaps I can help him though. I was with Lennox at the time."

"You were? That's awkward. You may have to corroborate him."

"I certainly shall. I have the seat."

"What?"

"Lennox dropped the ticket. After he had gone, I found it on the floor. It is in my shop now."

"Well, well!" Verelst astoundedly exclaimed. "But, here, hold on. The papers say he had a return check."

Jones flicked his ashes. "I have one or two myself. Probably you have. Even otherwise return checks tell no tales, or rather no dates."

"I never thought of that."

"Think of it now, then."

"Yes, but confound it, there is the stiletto."

"As you say, there it is and I wish it were here. It is mine."

Verelst adjusted his glasses. "What are you talking about?"

"The war," Jones answered. "What else? In my shop last evening, Lennox was drawing his will. In gathering up the sheets, the knife must have got among them and, without knowing it, he carried it off. This morning I missed it. The loss affected me profoundly. It is an old friend."

"You don't tell me."

"Don't I? I'll go so far as to lay you another basket of pippins that the police can't produce another like it. On the blade is inscribed *Penetrabo*—which is an endearing device."

"But see here," Verelst excitedly exclaimed. "You must tell Dunwoodie. You——" In sheer astonishment he broke off.

Innocently Jones surveyed him. "You think it important as all that?"

"Important? Important isn't the word."

With the same air of innocence, Jones nodded. "I thought it wasn't the word. I should have said trivial."

"But——"

Wickedly Jones laughed. "If you feel reckless enough to go another basket of pippins, I will wager that if I tell Dunwoodie anything—and mind the 'if'—he will agree that the paper-cutter is of no consequence—except to its lawful owner, who wants it back."

"But tell me——"

"Anything you like. For the moment, though, tell me something."

"What?"

Jones blew a ring of smoke. "Do you happen to know whether Paliser had anything?"

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

Jones blew another ring. "I had an idea that his mother might have left him something. You knew her, didn't you? Any way, you still know M. P. Did he ever say anything about it?"

"He did not need to. It was in the papers. He made over to him the Splendor, the Place, and some Wall Street and lower Broadway property that has been part of the Paliser estate since the year One."

"What is it all worth?" Jones asked. "Ten or twenty million?"

"Thirty, I should say. Perhaps more. But what has it to do with Lennox?"

Negligently Jones flicked his ashes. "Well, it changes the subject. I can't talk about the same thing all the time. It is too fatiguing."

As he spoke, he stood up.

Verelst put out a hand. "Dunwoodie is sure to look in. Where are you off to?"

Jones smiled at him. "I am going to gaze in a window where there are pippins on view."

"Go to the devil!" said Verelst, who also got up.

Fabulists tell strange tales. It is their business to tell them. Jones had no intention of looking at pippins. What he had in mind was fruit of another variety. It was some distance away. Before he could make an appreciable move toward it, Verelst, who had turned from him, turned back.

"There!"

Beyond, through the high-arched entrance, a man was limping. He had the battered face of an old bulldog and the rumpled clothes of a young ruffian.

"There's Dunwoodie!"

Verelst, a hand on Jones' elbow, propelled him toward the lawyer, who gratified them with the look, very baleful and equally famous, with which he was said to reverse the Bench.

But Verelst, afraid of nothing except damp sheets, stretched a hand. "You know Ten Eyck Jones. He has something very important to tell you."

"Yes," said Jones. "In March, on the eighth or ninth, I have forgotten which, but it must be in the 'Law Journal,' a decision was rendered——"

He got no farther. Other members, crowding about, were questioning, surmising, eager for a detail, a prediction, an obiter dictum, for anything they could take away and repeat concerning the murder, in which all knew that the great man was to appear.

But Dunwoodie was making himself heard, and not gently either. It was as though already he was at the district attorney's throat.

"Where is the evidence? Where is it? Where is the evidence? There is not a shred, not a scintilla. On the absence of facts adduced, I shall maintain what I assert until the last armed Court of Appeals expires. Hum! Ha!"

Fiercely he turned on Jones. "What were you saying, sir?"

Before Jones could reply, Verelst cut in. "The stiletto is his. He has the opera-ticket. He——"

"Imbeciles tell each other that great men think alike," Jones, interrupting, remarked at Dunwoodie. "I merely happened to be forestalling your views, when a recent decision occurred to me and——"

Jones' remarks were lost, drowned by others, by questions, exclamations, the drivel that amazement creates.

"But, I say——" "Tell me this——" "No evidence!" "The stiletto his!" "How did Lennox get it?" "Then what about——"

Dunwoodie, fastening on Jones, roared at him. "You tell me the instrument is yours?"

Jones patted his chin. "I did not, but I will."

"How do you know, sir?"

"It has a little love message on it."

"Hum! Ha!" Dunwoodie barked. "Come to my office to-morrow. Come before ten."

Dreamily Jones tilted his hat. "I am not up before ten. Where do you live? In the Roaring Forties?"

But, in the mounting clamour, the answer, if answer there were, was submerged. Jones went out to the street, entered a taxi, gave an address and sailed away, up and across the Park, along the Riverside and into the longest thoroughfare—caravan routes excepted—on the planet.

On a corner was a drug-shop, where anything was to be had, even to umbrellas and, from a sign that hung there, apparently a notary public also. Opposite was a saloon, the Ladies Entrance horribly hospitable. Jones' trained eye—the eye of a novelist—gathered these things which it dropped in that bag which the subconscious is. Meanwhile the car, scattering children, tooted, turned and stopped before a leprous door.

In the hall, a girl of twelve, with the face of a seraph, and the voice of a fiend, was shrieking at a switchboard. Jones fearing, if he addressed her, that she might curse him, went on and up, higher, still higher, and began to feel quite birdlike. On the successive landings were doors and he wondered what tragedies, what comedies, what aims, lofty, mean or merely diabolic, they concealed. They were all labelled

with names, Hun or Hebrew, usually both. But one name differed. It caressed.

There he rang.

When it opened, a strawberry mouth opened also. "Oh!" Cassy's blue eyes were red. There was fright in them. "It is horrible! Tell me, do you think it was he?"

Jones removed his hat. "I know it was not."

That mouth opened again, opened for breath, opened with relief. Gasping, she stared. "Thank God! I was afraid—— But are you sure? It was I who told him—I thought it my fault. It was killing me. Tell me. Are you really sure?"

Jones motioned. "His lawyer is. I have just seen him."

"He is! Thank God then! Thank God! And my father! It has made him ill. He liked him so! I am going for medicine now. Will you go in and speak to him?"

She turned and called. "It is Mr. Jones—a friend of Mr. Lennox." She turned again. "I will be back in a minute."

Beyond, in the room with the piano and the painted warrior, the musician lay on a sofa, bundled in a rug. There was not much space on the sofa, yet, as Jones entered, he seemed to recede. Then, cavernously, he spoke.

"Forgive me for not rising. This business has been too much for me. Sit down."

Jones put his hat on the table and drew a chair. "I am sorry it has upset you. It amounts to nothing."

Perplexedly the musician repeated it. "Nothing?"

"I was referring to our friend Lennox."

"You call his arrest nothing?"

"Well, everything is relative. It may seem unusual to be held without bail and yet, if we all were, it would be commonplace."

The musician plucked at the rug. "I suppose everybody thinks he did it?"

"Everybody, no. I don't think so and I am sure your daughter doesn't."

"I wish she would hurry."

"Nor do you."

"No, I don't think so."

"I doubt if the police do either."

"After jailing him!"

Jones, who had been taking in the room, the piano, the portrait, the table, sketched a gesture.

"We are all in jail. The opinion of the world is a prison, our own ideas are another. We are doubly jailed, and very justly. We are depraved animals. We think, or think we think, and what we think others have thought for us and, as a rule, erroneously."

From a phonograph somewhere, in some adjacent den, there floated a tenor aria, the *Bella figlia del amore*, pierced suddenly and beautifully by a contralto's rich voice.

Jones turned. "That's Caruso. I don't know who the Maddelena is. Do you remember Campanini?"

"Yes, I remember him. He was a better actor than Caruso."

"And so ugly that he was good-looking. Caruso is becoming uneven."

Vaguely the musician considered the novelist. "You think so?"

"It rather looked that way last night."

Angelo Cara plucked again at the rug.

"But," Jones continued, "in the 'Terra addio' he made up for it. What an enchantment that duo is!"

The musician's hand moved from the rug to his face. "You were there then?"

I was this morning, thought Jones, but he said: "How sinful Rigoletto is by comparison to Aïda—by comparison I mean to the last act."

The other duo now had become a quartette. The voices of Gilda and Rigoletto were fusing with those of the figlia and the duke.

The musician appeared to be listening. His sunken eyes were lifted. Slowly he turned them on Jones.

"You didn't see anything, did you?"

"Last night? I did not see Lennox, if that is what you mean, or Paliser—except for a moment, during the crypt scene."

Chokingly the musician drew breath. In the effort he gasped. "Then you know."

"Yes, I know."

The rug rose and fell. It was as though there were a wave beneath it.

With an air of detachment, Jones added: "Paliser turned to see who was there. A sword-cane told him."

The musician's lips twitched, his face had contracted, his hand now was on his breast. "I wish Cassy would hurry. She's gone for a myl."

"Is it far?"

"The corner. Are you going to do anything?"

Jones shook his head. "I don't need to."

The sunken eyes were upon him. "Why do you say that?"

"You are an honest man."

The sunken eyes wavered. "At least I never supposed they would arrest Lennox. How could I?"

"No one could have supposed it. Besides, in your own conscience you were justified, were you not?"

"You know about that, too?"

"Yes, I know about that."

The Rigoletto disc now had been replaced by another, one from which a voice brayed, a voice nasal, jocular, felonious.

"That beast ought to be shot," Jones added.

The musician raised himself a little. "You don't misjudge her, do you?"

Jones, annoyed at the swill tossed about, had turned from him. He turned back. "Believe me, Mr. Cara, there is no one for whom I have a higher respect."

A spasm seized the musician. For a moment, save for the effort at breath, he was silent. Then feebly he said: "I wish she would hurry."

"Can I do anything?"

"Yes, tell me. Do you condemn me?"

The novelist hesitated. "There are no human scales for any soul. Though, to be sure——"

"What?"

"It might have been avoided. As it is, they will suspect her."

"Cassy?"

"Naturally. They can't hold Lennox on a paper-cutter—that belongs to me, and a few empty words said in my presence and which, if necessary, I did not hear. They can't hold him on that. But when they learn, as they will, the circumstances of your daughter's misadventure, they will arrest her."

"Merciful God!"

The jeopardy to her, a jeopardy previously undiscerned, but which then shaken at him, instantly took shape, twisted his mouth into the appalling grimace that mediæval art gave to the damned.

"And you don't want that," Jones remotely resumed.

"Want it!" Galvanised by the shock, the musician

sat suddenly up. "Last night, after I got back, I slept like a log. This morning, I felt if I had not done it, I would still have it to do and that satisfied me. But afterwards, when I learned about Lennox, it threw me here. Now—— My God!"

He fell back.

The poor devil is done for, thought Jones, who, wondering whether he could get it over in time, leaned forward.

"Mr. Cara, don't you think you had best make it plain sailing for everybody, and let me draw up a declaration?"

The disc now had run out. The grunt of the beast was stilled. From beyond came the quick click of a key. Almost at once Cassy appeared.

She hurried to her father. "There were people ahead of me. They took forever. Has Mr. Jones told you? Mr. Lennox did not do it."

Breaking a tube in a handkerchief, she was administering the amyl and Jones wondered whether she could then suspect. But her face was turned from him, he could not read it, and realising that, in any event, she must be spared the next act, he cast about for an excuse to get her away. At once, remembering the notary, he produced him.

"Your father wants me to draw a paper on which his signature should be attested. If I am not asking too much, would you mind going back to the druggist for the notary whose sign I saw there?"

Cassy turned from her father. "A paper? What paper?"

Bravely Jones lied. "A will."

Cassy looked from one to the other. "The poor dear often has these attacks. He will be better soon—now that he knows. Won't you, daddy?"

Angelo Cara's eyes had in them an expression infinitely tender, equally vacant. It was as though, in thinking of her, he was thinking too of something else. Though, as Jones afterward decided, he probably was not thinking at all.

Cassy exclaimed at him. "Besides, what have you—except me?"

"Everybody has to make a will," Jones, lying again, put in. "There has been a new law passed. The eternal revenue collector requires it."

Cassy smoothed the rug, put the handkerchief on the table, opened a drawer, got out some paper, a pen, a bottle of ink.

In a moment she had gone.

Jones seated himself at the table. "Forgive me for asking, but may I assume that you believe in God, a life hereafter and in the rewards and punishments which, we are told, await us?"

The musician closed his eyes.

"Thank you," said Jones, who began to write:

I, Angelo Cara, being in full possession of my senses and conscious of the immanence of death, do solemnly swear to the truth of this my dying declaration, which, I also solemnly swear, is made by me without any collusion with Keith Lennox. First; I firmly believe in God, in a life hereafter, and in future rewards and punishments. Second; I alone am guilty of the murder of Montagu Paliser, jr., whom I killed without aid or accomplices and without the privity or knowledge of any other person.

Jones, wishing that in his law-school days he had crammed less and studied more, looked up.

"I cannot compliment you on your pen, Mr. Cara. But then, pen and ink always seem so emphatic. Per-

sonally, I prefer a pencil. Writing with a pencil is like talking in a whisper."

It was in an effort to deodorise the atmosphere, charged with the ghastly, that he said it. The declarant did not appear to notice. His sunken eyes had been closed. Widely they opened.

"The other side!"

Jones blotted the declaration. "The other side cannot be very different from this side. Not that part of it at least which people, such as you and I, first visit. A bit farther on, I suppose we prepare for our return here. For that matter, it will be very careless of us, if we don't. We relive and redie and redie and relive, endlessly, ad infinitum. The Church does not put it in just that manner, but the allegory of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting amounts, perhaps, to the same thing. 'Never the spirit was born, the spirit shall cease to be never.' That is the way Edwin Arnold expressed it, after the 'Gita' had expressed it for him. But probably you have not frequented the 'Gita,' Mr. Cara. It is an exceedingly——"

"Cassy's lace dress is all torn. It was so pretty."

He is in the astral now, thought Jones, who said: "She will have a much prettier one."

But now again from the hall came that quick click and Cassy appeared, a little fat man behind her.

Jones stood up. "How do do. You know Mr. Cara. Mr. Cara wants his signature attested."

The little man exhibited his gold teeth. "With a will that is not the way. I told this young lady so but she would have it that I come along."

The young lady, who was taking her hat off, left the room.

Jones fished in a pocket. "It is very good of you.

Here, if you please, is your fee. The document is not a will, it is a release."

As the novelist spoke, he put the pen in the musician's hand and, finding it necessary, or thinking that it was, for, as he afterward realised, it was not, he guided it.

"You acknowledge this——" the notary began. But at the moment Cassy returned and, it may be, distracted by her, he mumbled the rest, took the reply for granted, applied the stamp, exhibited his teeth. Then, at once, the hall had him.

Cassy turned to Jones. Her face disclosed as many emotions as an opal has colours. Relief, longing, uncertainty, and distress were there, ringed in beauty.

"Miss Austen ought to know how she has misjudged him. Do you suppose she would let me see her?"

Bully for you! thought Jones, who said: "I cannot imagine any one refusing you anything."

In speaking, he heard something. Cassy turned. She too had heard it. But what?

With a cry she ran to the sofa. "Daddy!"

His face was grey, the grey that dawn has, the grey than which there is nothing greyer and yet in which there is light. That light was there. His upper-lip was just a little raised. It was as though he had seen something that pleased him and of which he was about to tell.

"Daddy!"

Jones followed her. He drew down the rug and bent over. After a moment, he drew the rug up, well up, and, with a forefinger, saluted.

Cassy, tearing the covering back, flung herself there. Jones could not see her tears. He heard them. Her slim body shook.

XXXI

ON leaving the walk-up Jones discovered a restaurant that he judged convenient and vile. But the convenience appealed, and the villainy of the place did not extend to the telephone-book, which was the first thing he ordered.

While waiting for it, it occurred to him that in a novel the death he had witnessed would seem very pat. Why is life so artificial? he wonderingly asked.

The query suggested another. It concerned not the decedent but his daughter.

By the Lord Harry, he told himself, her linen shall not be washed in public if I can prevent it, and what is the use in being a novelist if you can't invent?

But now the book was before him. In it he found that Dunwoodie resided near Columbia University. It was ages since he had ventured in that neighbourhood, which, when finally he got there, gave him the agreeable sensation of being in a city other than New York.

Hic Labor, Haec Quies, he saw written on the statue of a tall maiden, and though, in New York, quiet is to be had only in the infrequent cemeteries, deep down, yet with the rest of the inscription he had been engaged all day.

Gravely saluting the maiden, who was but partly false, he passed on to an apartment-house and to Dunwoodie's door, which was opened by Dunwoodie

himself. In slippers and a tattered gown, he was Hogarthian.

"I thought it a messenger!" he bitterly exclaimed.

Jones smiled at him. "When a man of your eminence is not wrong, he is invariably right. I am a messenger."

In the voice of an ogre, Dunwoodie took it up. "What is the message, sir?"

Jones pointed at the ceiling. Involuntarily, Dunwoodie looked up and then angrily at the novelist.

"An order of release," the latter announced.

Dunwoodie glared. "I suppose, sir, I must let you in, but allow me to tell you——"

Urbanely Jones gestured. "Pray do not ask my permission, it is a privilege to listen to anything you may say."

Dunwoodie turned. Through a winding hall he led the way to a room in which a lane went from the threshold to a table. The lane was bordered with an underbush of newspapers, pamphlets, magazines. Behind the underbush was a forest of books. Beside the table were an armchair and a stool. From above, hung a light. Otherwise, save for cobwebs, the room was bare and very relaxing.

Dunwoodie taking the chair, indicated the stool. "Now, sir!"

Jones gave him the declaration.

With not more than a glance Dunwoodie possessed himself of the contents. He put it down.

"If I had not known you had studied law, not for a moment would that rigamarole lead me to suspect it."

In a protest which was quite futile, Jones raised a hand. "The notary is unnecessary, I know that. I

know also that a dying declaration is not the best evidence, but——”

“Do you at least know that the declarant is dead?”

Jones, who favoured the dramatic, nodded. “He died in my arms.”

Dunwoodie took it in and took it out. “It is curious how crime leads to bad taste.”

Jones leaned forward. “I may tell you for your information——”

“Spare me, I am overburdened with information as it is.”

Jones sat back. He had no intention of taking Dunwoodie then behind the scenes. That would come later. But he did want to try out an invention that had occurred to him. He sighed.

“Don’t you care to hear why he did it?”

“Not in the least.”

“But——”

Dunwoodie fumbled in a pocket. “The district attorney may be more receptive. I shall go to him in the morning and I will thank you to go with me.”

“I am not up in the morning.”

“Then don’t go to bed.”

From the pocket, Dunwoodie extracted an enormous handkerchief. It fascinated Jones. He had never seen one that resembled it.

“You dispose of me admirably. The district attorney, I suppose, will enter a nolle prosequi.”

In that handkerchief, Dunwoodie snorted. “You may suppose what you like.”

Jones laughed. “It is my business to suppose. I suppose, when the murder was committed, that Lennox was at home. If I am right, he has an alibi which his servant can confirm.”

Dunwoodie stared. "Whatever your business may be, it is not to teach me mine."

Jones drew out a cigarette-case. "Let me sit at your feet then. What does Lennox say?"

"How inquisitive you are! But to be rid of you, he——"

"May I smoke?" Jones interrupted.

"Good God, sir! You are not preparing to make a night of it?"

"I have one or two other little matters in hand. But since I may suppose all I like, I take it that Lennox intended to go to the opera, though I fancy also that he had no intention of going to Paliser's box. I suppose that he intended to wait about and go for him hot and heavy when he came out. I suppose also that, while dressing, he changed his mind. And, by the way, isn't there such a writ as a mandamus, or a duces tecum? I would like my paper-cutter returned."

"Confound your paper-cutter! You don't deserve to have me admit it, but Lennox' account of it is that before going on to the opera, he stopped to write a letter to Miss—er—Hum! Ha!"

"Miss Austen?"

"And when he got through it was midnight."

"I'll lay a pippin he didn't send it."

"What, sir?"

"Lennox had a lot to say. It was gagging him. He would have suffocated if he had kept it in. The effect of getting it on black and white was an emetic. He read it over, judged it inadequate, tore it up. I have done the same thing. I daresay you have."

The great man sat back. "His scrap-basket has been visited. The letter was there."

"Well, then, I suppose the short and long of it is, you will have him out to-morrow."

"As I said, you may suppose all you like."

"Without indiscretion then, may I suppose that you live here alone?"

Dunwoodie flourished his handkerchief. It was cotton and big as a towel.

"I am not as young as you are, sir, and whether erroneously or not, I believe myself better informed."

"Ah!" Jones put in. "Your physiognomy corroborates you. I have sometimes thought that it were difficult for the Seven Sages to be as wise as you look—which is the reason, perhaps, why I do not quite follow you."

"I did not imagine that you would. You are a sociable being. Every imbecile is pitiaibly sociable. But for a thinking man, a man without vices and without virtues, what is there except solitude?"

Appreciatively Jones motioned. "Thank you for descending to my level. As it happens, I also have a cloister where I have the double advantage of being by myself and of not being with others. But now that I am in your hermitage, there is this Matter of Ziegler, concerning which I would like the benefit of your professional advice."

"Hum! Ha! Got yourself mixed up with a woman and want me to pull you out. Well, sir, you will find it expensive. But a hermitage is not an office. I shall expect you at mine to-morrow. I shall expect you before ten."

Dunwoodie stood up. "To-morrow, though, your turpitudes will have to wait. Have you been served?"

Jones laughed. "Not yet."

"Time enough then. You can find the door?"

Through the lane, bordered by rubbish, and on through the winding hall, Jones went out. As Dunwoodie had said, there was time enough. There had been no service—no summons, no complaint. It might be that there would be none. The matter might adjust itself without any. It might be that there was no ground for action. Jones could not tell. After the manner of those who have crammed for a law examination, there had been a moment when he knew, or thought he knew, it all. But also after the manner of those who have not taken the post-graduate course which practice is, the crammed knowledge had gone. Only remnants and misfits remained. It was on these that he had conjectured the suit which, meanwhile, constituted a nut to crack. There was time and to spare though. Besides, for the moment, he had other things to do.

Then, as he went on to attend to them, he wondered why Dunwoodie, who, he thought, must make a hundred thousand a year, lived like a ragpicker.

Before him, the starshell, which imagination projects, burst suddenly.

He said he had no virtues and probably told the truth, Jones decided. In which case he cannot be a miser. But he also said he had no vices and probably lied like a thief. The old scoundrel is a philanthropist. I would wager an orchard of pippins on that, but there is no one to take me up—except this policeman.

"Officer," he resumed aloud. "Behold a stranger in a strange land. By any miracle, is there a taxi-stand nearby?"

Then presently Jones was directing a driver.

"The Tombs!"

XXXII

IN a dirty cell Lennox sat on a dirty cot. Through a door, dirty too, but barred, came a shuffle of feet, the sound of the caged at bay and that odour, perhaps unique, which prisons share, the smell of dry-rot, perspiration, disinfectants and poisoned teeth. In addition to the odour there was light, not much, but some. Nearby was a sink. Altogether it was a very nice cell, fit for the Kaiser. Lennox took no pleasure in it. Rage enveloped him. The rage was caused not by the cell but by his opinion of it. That was only human.

Events in themselves are empty. It is we who fill them. They become important or negligible, according to the point of view. We give them the colours, violent, agreeable, or merely neutral, that they obtain. It is the point of view that fills and affects them. The point of view can turn three walls and a door into a madhouse. It can convert them into an ivory tower. To Lennox they were merely revolting.

That morning he had laughed. His arrest amused him. He laughed at it, laughed at the police. They took no offence. Instead they took the cigars that he offered and a few accessories which they grabbed. It is a way the police have. Still Lennox laughed. He knew of course that at Headquarters he would be at once released, the entire incident properly regretted. When he found himself not only elaborately wrong

but in court, laughter ceased. Anger replaced it. He had been first amused, then surprised, afterwards exasperated, emotions that finally added into rage, not at others but at himself, which was rather decent. In any of the defeats of life, the simple blame others; the wise blame themselves; the evolved blame nobody. Lennox had not reached that high plane then but in directing his anger at himself he showed the advantages of civilisation which the war has put in such admirable relief.

Now, on that cot, in that cell, ragingly he retraced his steps. He saw himself loving Margaret Austen as though he were to love her forever. A hero can do no more. He saw her loving him with a love so light that a breath had blown it away. A nymph in the brake could do no worse. Yet whether on her part it were perversity or mere shallowness, the result was the same. It had landed him in jail. For that he acquitted her completely. What he could not forgive was his own stupidity in persisting in loving her after she had turned away.

The night before, while, at the opera, the *Terra Addio* was being sung, he had been writing her one of the endless letters that only those vomiting in an attack of indignation morbus ever produce. In the relief of getting it in black and white, the nausea abated. Then judging it all very idle, he tore the letter in two. It was a gesture made before relapsing into a silence which he had intended should be eternal. At the very moment when Paliser was being run through the gizzards, he, turning a page of life, had scrawled on it *Hic jacet*.

Now, on that cot, Paliser recurring, he thought of him with so little animosity that he judged his spec-

tacular death inadequate. But who, he wondered, had staged it? Not Cassy. Cassy took things with too high a hand and reasonably perhaps, since she took them from where her temperament had placed her. Then, without further effort at the riddle, his thoughts drifted back to that afternoon when, from his rooms, the sunlight had followed her out like a dog.

He had been looking at the floor, but without seeing it. Then at once, without seeing it either, he saw something else, something which for a long time must have been there, something that had been acting on him and in him without his knowledge. It was the key to another prison, the key to the prison that life often is and which, in the great defeats, every man who is a man finds at his feet and usually without looking for it either.

"But I love her!" he suddenly exclaimed.

There is a magic in those words. No sooner were they uttered than his mind became a rendezvous of apparitions. He saw Cassy as he had seen her first, as he had seen her last, as he had seen her through all the changes and mutations of their acquaintance, saw her eyes lifted to his, saw her face turned from him.

The crystallisation which, operating in the myriad cells of the brain, creates our tastes, our temptations, our desires; creates them unknown to us, creates them even against our will, and which without his will or knowledge, had, like a chemical precipitate, been acting on him, then was complete.

"I love her!" he repeated.

The dirty cot, the dirty cell, the dirty floor, a point of view was transforming. At the moment they ceased to be revolting. Then immediately another view restored their charm.

"She won't have me!"

The dirty cell reshaped itself and he thought of life, a blind fate treacherous always.

"Good Lord, how I envy you!"

Lennox turned. Wriggling through the bars a hand which a keeper checked, stood Jones.

"When Cervantes enjoyed the advantages that you possess, the walls parted and through them cavalcaded the strumpet whose name is Fame. In circumstances equally inspiring Bunyan entertained that hussy. Verlaine too. From a dungeon she lifted him to Parnassus, lifted him to the top. If I only had their luck—and yours! It is too good for you. You don't appreciate it. Besides you will be out to-morrow."

"I ought not to be here at all," Lennox indignantly retorted.

"No, you are most undeserving. Mais écoute. C'est le père de la petite qui a fait le coup. Il me l'a avoué, ensuite il a claqué et depuis j'ai vu ton avocat. C'est une brute mais——"

"Can that," put in the keeper, a huge creature with a cauliflower face, dingy and gnarled. "You guys got to cough English."

Ingratiatingly Jones turned to him. "I mistook you for a distinguished foreigner. Dear me, my life is too full of pleasure!"

He turned to Lennox. "That's it. You are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Now that I have envied you insufficiently I'll go too. While I am about it I'll go to Park Avenue. Any message?"

"None."

"Make it briefer. Besides, look here. I'll wager a wilderness of pippins that Park Avenue was not and never thought of being engaged to what's his name.

I'll wager because it is not in the picture. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you."

"You are very gifted. Nothing wrong with your tongue, though, is there?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Behold then the messenger awaiting the message."

"Very good. I'm through. Absolutely, completely, entirely. If you must be a busybody say that. I'm through."

But that was not Jones' idea of the game and he out with it. "I'll do nothing of the kind."

"Won't you?" Lennox retorted. He had remained seated. But rising then, he looked at the keeper, motioned at Jones.

"If that man asks for me again, say I'm out."

Jones laughed. "Wow-wow, old cock! I wish I could have said that but I probably shall. Meanwhile book this: Dinner to-morrow, Athenæum at eight. By-bye. Remember Cervantes. Don't forget Verlaine. Sweet dreams."

Lennox sat down, looked at the key, tried to turn it. That door too was barred.

XXXIII

THE offices of Dunwoodie, Bramwell, Strawbridge and Cohen were supplied with a rotunda in which Jones sat waiting, and Jones loved to sit and wait.

Since the musician's tenement had crumbled and the soul of the violinist had gone forth, gone to the unseen assessors who pityingly, with indulgent hands, weigh our stupid sins, since then a week had passed. During it, a paper signed by the dead had been admitted by the living, a prisoner had been discharged and for no other imaginable reason than because he had killed nobody, Lennox became a hero.

New York is very forgetful. Lennox sank back into the blank anonymity to which humanity in the aggregate is eternally condemned and from which, at a bound, he had leaped. The papers were to tell of him again, but casually, without scareheads, among the yesterdays and aviators in France. That though was later.

Meanwhile an enigma remained. Very heroically a young man had done nothing. Hurrah and good-bye! The calciums of curiosity turned on an obscure fiddler who, after murdering another young man, had succeeded in bilking the chair.

But why had he killed him? That was the enigma, one which would have been exciting, if the solution had not been so prompt and so tame. At the proceed-

ings which resulted in Lennox' discharge, it was testified that Angelo Cara had been temporarily deranged.

The testimony, expertly advanced by a novelist who was not an expert, the reporters grabbed before the court could rule it out. The grabbing was natural. The decedent's declaration had been made to Jones who, though not an alienist, was the teller of tales that have been translated into every polite language, including the Japanese, which is the politest of all. Moreover, have not the mendacious been properly subdivided into liars, damned liars and expert witnesses? To Verdun with the lot! Mr. Ten Eyck Jones was certainly not an expert, but certainly too he was somebody, he was a best-seller and in the way we live now, the testimony of the best-seller is entitled to every editorial respect. The court might rule his testimony out, city editors saluted it.

Jones' little invention did wash therefore and, in the washing, poured balm by the bucket over the father of the murdered man.

Then, gradually, like everything else, except war and the taxes, both murderer and murdered were dropped in the great dustbin of oblivion that awaits us all.

In the rotunda, meanwhile, Jones sat kicking his heels. It was in the morning, and always in the morning Jones was invisibly at work. Now, his routine upset, loathingly he kicked his heels. But Jones had ways of consoling himself that were very commonplace.

I am doing all the evil I can, he vindictively reflected, and it was with the comfort of his animosity about him that, ultimately, he was shown into an office—bright and, on this May forenoon, very airy—that gave on Broad Street.

Dunwoodie, twisting in a chair, glared at him.

"Ecce iterum Crispinus!" Jones tritely began. "What price retainers to-day?"

"I hoped to God I had seen the last of you," Dunwoodie, with elaborate, old-fashioned courtesy, replied.

Jones, disdaining to be asked, drew a chair.

Viciously Dunwoodie eyed him. "What the devil do you want?"

Jones smiled at him. "That decision."

"What decision, sir?"

"The one I cited when I brought you the paper that secured Lennox' discharge."

"Damme, sir, nothing of the kind. I would have had him discharged any way."

Jones' smile broadened. "You seem capable of anything. It is a great quality. Believe me, if I thought you lacked it, you would not now be enjoying my society."

"You flatter yourself strangely, sir. If you have nothing to say, don't keep on saying it."

"On the contrary, I am here to listen to you," Jones agreeably put in. "I want your views on that case, 'The Matter of Ziegler.'"

"Hum! Ha! Got yourself in a mess. Yaas. I remember. Been served yet? Give me the facts."

One after another, Jones produced them.

During their recital, Dunwoodie twirled his thumbs. At their conclusion, he expressed himself with entire freedom. After which, he saw Jones to the door, an act which he performed only when he felt particularly uncivil. At the moment the old bulldog's lip was lifted. But not at Jones.

Broad Street was very bright that day. Its bril-

liance did not extend to the market. Values were departing. The slump was on. Speculators, investors, the long and the shorts, bank-messengers, broker's-clerks, jostled Jones, who went around the corner, where a cavern gaped and swallowed him.

Crashingly the express carried him uptown. He did not know but that he might have lingered. There is always room at the top, though perhaps it is unwise to buy there. At the bottom, there is room too, much more. It is very gloomy, but it is the one safe place. Jones did not think that the market had got there yet. None the less it was inviting. On the other hand, he did think he might eat something. There was a restaurant that he wot of where, the week before, he had had a horrible bite. The restaurant was nauseating, but convenient. To that dual attraction he succumbed.

At table there, he meditated on the inscrutable possibilities of life which, he decided, is full of changes, particularly in the subway; whereupon a tale in Per-rault's best manner occurred to him.

A waiter, loutish and yet infinitely dreary, intervened. Jones paid and went out on the upper reaches of Broadway. The fairy-tale that he had evoked accompanied him. It was charming as only a fairy-tale can be. But the end, while happy, was hazy. He did not at all know whether it would do.

Abruptly he awoke.

"Will you come in?" Cassy was saying.

She had her every-day manner, her every-day clothes, her usual hat. Jones, noting these details, inwardly commended them. But at once, another detail was apparent. The entrance to the room where the *Bella figlia* had been succeeded by a dirge, was blocked. There was a table in it.

Cassy motioned. "I was trying to get it out when it got itself wedged there. Will you crawl under it, as I have to, or would you prefer to use it as a divan?"

"Where your ladyship crawleth, I will crawl," Jones gravely replied. "I just love going on all fours."

As he spoke he went under. With a sad little smile she followed.

"I know I ought to be in mourning," she told him as he brushed his knees.

She hesitated and sat down. She did not say that she lacked the money to buy the suits and trappings. She did not want to say that she had sold the table, which was the last relic of her early home, nor yet that she had been trying to get it out, in order to prevent the Jew purchaser from again coming in. Instead, she fingered her smock.

"I have been looking for an engagement and they don't want you in black."

Jones took a chair. "War has made mourning an anachronism in Europe. If it lasts long enough, it will do the same here and do the same with art. But you are very brave." He looked about. "I understood your father had a Cremona."

"The poor dear thought so, but a dealer to whom I took it said it was a Tyrolean copy."

Jones put down his hat. "The brutes always say something of the kind. What did it look like?"

Cassy glanced at him. "A flute, of course. What else would a violin look like?"

"You are quite right. I meant the colour."

"Oh, the colour! Madeira with a sheen in it."

"Yes!" Jones exclaimed. "That is the exact and precise description of the Amati varnish, of which

the secret is lost. I hope you did not let the brute have it."

Cassy did not want to tell him that either. But when you are very forlorn it is hard to keep everything in.

"I needed a little for the funeral and he gave it to me."

"And it was worth thousands! Have you found an engagement?"

"The season is ending. Then too, either I have lost confidence or I am not up to it, not yet at least."

"I can understand that."

Cassy gestured. "It is not this empty room, it is the doors that slam. We know we should hasten to love those whom we do love, lest they leave us forever before we have loved them enough. But do we? We think we have time and to spare. I know I thought so. I was careless, forgetful, selfish. That is one of the doors. I can't close it."

"Time will."

"Perhaps. Meanwhile I am told I should change my name. At first, I felt very bitterly toward you for what you did here. It seemed inhuman of you. Since then I have realised that you could not have done otherwise. It saved Mr. Lennox. I would have done that."

"I am sure of it."

"But I won't change my name. I won't put such an affront on the poor dear who thought—yet there! I shall never know what he thought, but who, however wrongly, did it because of me. If only I had not told him! I ought never to have said a word. Never! That door slams the loudest. It wakes me. It is slamming all the time."

"That too shall pass."

Cassy doubted it. The door and the noise of it hurt. Her eyes filled. Yet, too sensitive to weep at anybody, even at an inkbeast, she stood up, went to the window and, while reabsorbing her tears, looked, or affected to look, at a lean stripe of blue sky.

Meditatively Jones considered her. "Fine day for a walk."

It was as though he had offered her a handkerchief. Tearful no longer, but annoyed, she turned and sat down.

"You seem very original."

"It is absentmindedness, I think. I meant to ask, are you ever down near the Stock Exchange?"

"That is where Mr. Lennox goes, isn't it?"

"There are others that frequent the neighbourhood. Among them is a deacon named Dunwoodie."

"Isn't he the lawyer who acted for Mr. Lennox?"

"Now you mention it, I believe he is. Anyway, I wonder if you would care to have him act for you?"

Cassy crossed her hands. "I don't understand you."

"For a moment or two, he didn't either. Then he said he would like to see you. That was an hour ago. I have just come from his office."

"But what in the world does he want of me? Everything is over now, isn't it? Or are there more doors? Really, if there are, I don't think I can stand it. I don't think I can, Mr. Jones."

"Yes, but there are doors that don't slam, doors that are closed and locked and barred. Sometimes there is romance behind them, sometimes there are santalwood boxes crammed with rubies; sometimes there are secrets, sometimes there are landscapes of beckoning palms. One never quite knows what there is behind

closed doors. He may open one or two for you. Wouldn't it interest you to let him try?"

Cassy's eyelids had been a trifle tremulous, in her under-lip there had been also a little uncertainty. But at the vistas which the novelist dangled at her, she succeeded in looking, as she could look, immeasurably remote.

"That sort of thing is chorus-girl!"

Blankly Jones stared. "What sort of thing?"

"Why, you want me to bring an action. I will do nothing of the kind. Even if he were living, I would rather be dead. Besides, it was all my fault. I ought to have known better."

"Better than what?" enquired the novelist, who now had got his bearings.

"Mr. Jones, I told you all about it."

"Forgive me, if I seem to contradict you. You did not tell all."

Cassy stiffened.

"How could you?" Jones continued. "Details are so tiresome. To-day when I was talking to Dunwoodie, I advanced a few. Dunwoodie is a very ordinary person. Details bore you, they bore me. He dotes on them. By the way, you said something about changing your name. I wish you would. Couldn't you take mine?"

"You are ridiculous."

"As you like. Any one else would call me mercenary."

He's crazy, Cassy uncomfortably reflected. What shall I do?

Modestly the novelist motioned. "Ten Eyck Jones now! It doesn't rhyme with Victor Hugo or even

with Andrew Carnegie, but it has a lilt. It might be worse."

"What are you talking about?" Cassy, with increasing discomfort, put in.

"There is a little thing that turns men into flint and women into putty. That's what I am talking about. I am talking money."

"Thank you. The subject does not interest me."

"Ah, but you are evolved! Would that the butcher were! We all have to consider his incapacities and money helps us. I have an idea that your dear departed may have left you a trifle."

"Really, Mr. Jones, you are talking nonsense."

"It is a specialty of mine."

"Besides, it is impossible."

"Impossible is a word that intelligent young women never employ."

"Very good. Admitting the possibility, I won't take it."

"It might be paid into your bank."

"I haven't any bank."

"One could be found for you."

"I would tell them not to accept it."

"The bank that won't accept money does not exist."

Cassy flushed. "I rather liked you. Couldn't you be less hateful?"

"You are trying to pick a quarrel with me."

"Nothing of the kind."

"Then will you let me take you to Dunwoodie?"

"Certainly not."

"Then will you go alone?"

"But why? Why should I? What does this man with an absurd name want of me?"

Jones pulled at a cuff. "Well, look at it from this

angle. Before you discovered that your marriage was a sham, you were prepared to assume a few obligations and some of them may still subsist. The man with the absurd name can tell you what they are. Surely you are not a slacker. This is war-time."

With that abandonment which is so gracious in a woman, Cassy half raised a hand. "My front line is wavering."

Jones reached for his hat. "Over the top then!"
Under the table they crawled.

XXXIV

YOUR very obedient servant, madam."

With that and a fine bow, Dunwoodie greeted Cassy when Jones had succeeded in getting her into the inner and airy office. The old ruffian drew a chair.

"Do me the honour."

Cassy sat down. What a funny old man, she thought.

Jones addressing the door, remarked dreamily: "Pendente lite, I will renew my acquaintance with Swinburne's 'Espousals.'"

Dunwoodie glared. "You will find it in the library." Then he sat down, folded his hands on his waistcoat and smiled at Cassy. "Nice day."

"Very."

"Down here often?"

Cassy shook her docked hair. "No, and I don't at all know why I am here now. I do know though, and I may as well tell you at once, I have no intention of making a fuss."

Dunwoodie's smile, a smile quasi-ogrish, semi-paternal, expanded. "If our Potsdam friend only resembled you!"

For a young woman so recently and doubly bereaved, Cassy's blue smock and yellow skirt seemed to him properly subdued. Moreover, from a word that

Jones had dropped, he realised that wealth had not presided at their selection.

He twirled his thumbs. "But let me ask, what may your full name be?"

"Bianca Cara."

"Hum! Ha! Most becoming. And how young are you?"

Well, I like that! thought Cassy, who answered: "Twenty-one."

Dunwoodie crossed his legs. "You think me an impertinent old man. I don't mean to be impertinent. I take a great interest in you."

"Very good of you, I'm sure."

"Not at all. Is your grandmother living?"

"For heaven's sake! You did not know her, did you?"

"No, but I stand ready to take her place."

"You would find it difficult. She is buried in Portugal."

"The place of your grandfather then, the place of any one whom you can trust."

"But why?"

"Well, let me ask. What are your plans?"

"My plans? Mr. Jones asked me that. I have a sort of a voice and I am looking for an engagement. But the season is ending. Then too I am told I ought to change my name. I won't do it."

"Hum! Ha! But it appears that you have."

He's crazy too, thought Cassy, who said: "I don't know what you are talking about."

Dunwoodie extracted his towel "Why, my dear young lady, you are Mrs. Paliser."

Cassy flushed. "I am nothing of the kind. I don't know how you got such an idea."

Dunwoodie, quite as though he were doing some hard thinking, folded and refolded that towel which was his handkerchief. "Yet you married Montagu Paliser, jr., did you not?"

"Not at all. That is I thought I did, but the man who performed the ceremony was a gardener."

"Dear me! Is it possible! And where was this?"

What is it to you? thought Cassy. "At Paliser Place, if you must know."

"And when did it occur?"

"Really, Mr. Dunwoodie, I can't see why you are putting me through this examination, but if it is of any benefit to you, it happened just five days before he died."

"Anybody about?"

"Oh, yes. There were two other servants who enjoyed it very much. I heard them laughing and I don't blame them. It was a rare treat. A child would have laughed at it. All my fault too. I behaved like a ninny. But my great mistake was in telling my father. I would give the world if I had not. Won't you please send for Mr. Jones? As I told you, I don't know why I am here."

Dunwoodie shook out the towel. "You must blame him then. He said you were Paliser's widow."

"Well, you see I am not."

"Yet you consented to be his wife."

"Whose? Mr. Jones'?"

"Paliser's, my dear young lady. However fictitious the ceremony, you consented to be Paliser's wife."

"What if I did? It has nothing to do with it now."

"Just a little, perhaps. Did you hear Jones say that he would renew his acquaintance with Swinburne?"

"From the way he talks, one might think he knew him by heart."

"Yaas, he is very objectionable. But you are referring to the poet. He was referring to the jurist. The jurist wrote a very fine book. Let me quote a passage from it. 'It is the present and perfect consent the which alone maketh matrimony, without either solemnisation or'—here, Dunwoodie, skipping the frank old English, substituted—'or anything else, for neither the one nor the other is the essence of matrimony, but consent only. *Consensus non concubitus facit matrimoniam.*' Hum! Ha! In other words, whether marriage is or is not contracted in *facie ecclesiæ*, it is consent alone that constitutes its validity. You understand Latin?"

Cassy laughed. "I dream in it."

Dunwoodie laughed too. "Pleasant dreams to you always. But what I have quoted was the common law, and so remained until altered by the Revised Statutes, with which no doubt you are equally familiar."

Cassy smoothed her frock. "I was brought up on them."

"I don't need to tell you then that when adopted here they provided that marriage should be a civil contract. In so providing, they merely reaffirmed the existing common law. Subsequently, the law was changed. The legislature enacted that a marriage must be solemnised by certain persons—ecclesiastic, judicial or municipal—or else, that it should be entered into by written contract, which contract was to be filed in the office of the town clerk. Coincidentally the legislature prohibited any marriage contracted otherwise than in the manner then prescribed."

That morning Cassy had been to an agent, a sapon-

cious person with a fabulous nose. At the moment the nose was before her. She was wondering whether it would scent out for her an engagement.

"However," Dunwoodie, twisting the edge of his towel, continued, "various amendments were afterward adopted and certain sections repealed. Among the latter was the one containing the prohibition which I have cited. In my opinion, it was not the intention of the legislature to repeal it. Yet, however that may be, repealed it was. Since then, or, more exactly, a few weeks ago, the enactments regarding the manner in which marriage must be solemnised were held to be not mandatory but directory, the result being that the law originally prevailing has now come again into operation, common-law marriages are as valid as before and——"

Here Dunwoodie flaunted the towel.

"And you are Mrs. Paliser."

Of the entire exposition, Cassy heard but that. It ousted the agent and his fabulous nose. She bristled.

"I can't be. I don't want to be. You don't seem to see that the clergyman was not a clergyman at all. He was one of the help there. I thought I told you. Why, there was not even a license! That man said he had one. It was only another of the whimsicalities that took me in."

Dunwoodie repocketing the towel, showed his yellow teeth. "A young gentlewoman who dreams in Latin, and who was brought up on the Revised Statutes, must be familiar with Byron. 'Men were deceivers ever.' Not long ago, a Lovelace whose history is given in the New York Reports conducted himself in a manner that would be precisely analogous to that of your late husband, were it not that, instead of dying, he did what

was less judicious, he married again—and was sent up for bigamy. He too had omitted to secure a license. He also entertained a lady with a fancy-ball. None the less, the Supreme Court decided that he had legally tied the matrimonial noose about him and that decision the Court of Appeals affirmed.”

Cassy shook her pretty self. “Well, even so, I don’t see what difference it makes, now at any rate. He is dead and that is the end of it.”

“Hum! Not entirely. As widow you are entitled to a share in such property as your late husband possessed. How much, or how little, he did possess I cannot say. But I assume that such share of it as may accrue, will be—ha!—adequate for you.”

“But he hadn’t anything. He told me so.”

“He didn’t always tell you the truth though, did he? In any event it is probable that he left enough to provide for your maintenance.”

Cassy threw up her hands. “Never in the world.”

Dunwoodie again ran his eyes over the severity of her costume. “You think it would be inadequate?”

But Cassy was angry. “I don’t think anything about it. Whether it would or would not be adequate, does not make the slightest difference. I won’t take it.”

“Ha! And why not?”

Cassy fumed. “Why not? But isn’t it evident? That man had no intention of marrying me, no intention whatever of leaving me a cent.”

“As it happens, he did both.”

Cassy clenched her small fist. “No matter. He did not intend to and don’t you see if I were to accept a ha’penny of his wretched money, I would be benefiting by a crime for which may God forgive my poor, dear father.”

There was a point which the legislature had not considered, which not one of all the New York Reports construed, a point not of law but of conscience, a point for a tribunal other than that which sits in banco. It floored Dunwoodie.

Damnation, she's splendid, he decided as, mentally, he picked himself up. But it would never do to say so and he turned on her his famous look.

"Madam, once your marriage is established, the money becomes rightfully and legally yours, unless——"

With that look he was frowning at this handsome girl who took law and order with such a high hand. But behind the frown was a desire, which he restrained, to hug her.

Frowning still he looked from Cassy to the door and there at a boy, who was poking through it a nose on which freckles were strewn thick as bran.

"Mr. Rymple, sir, says he has an appointment."

The old ruffian, rising, turned to Cassy. "One moment, if you please."

The door, caught in a draught, slammed after him, though less violently than other doors that were slamming still. Would they never stop? Cassy wondered. Would they slam forever? Were there no rooms in life where she might enter and find the silence that is peace? Surely, some time, somewhere that silence might be hers.

She turned. Jones, looking extremely disagreeable, was walking in.

Cassy, closing her ears to those doors, exclaimed at him. "Here's a pretty how d'ye do. Mr. Dunwoodie says I am Mrs. Paliser."

"That afternoon, when you sent your love to my cat, I could have told you that. In fact I did."

From Jones' air and manner you would have said that he was willing and able to bite a ten-penny nail.

Cassy did not notice. "It appears, too, that I am entitled to some of his wretched money."

"It is unfortunate I did not know that also."

"I believe you did. But I sha'n't take it."

Jones drew a chair. Hatefully he looked her up and down.

"You are quite right. Sixty years ago there was but one millionaire in the country. The plutocrat had not appeared in the street, he had not even appeared in the dictionary. The breed was unknown. To-day there are herds of such creatures. I was reading the statistics recently and they depressed me beyond words. It is always depressing to know how much money other people have. You are quite right not to suffer poor devils to be depressed by you."

Mrs. Yallum! thought Cassy, who said as much; "I don't know what you are talking about."

"You are very intelligent. I am talking small change."

Cassy gave a shrug. "Mr. Dunwoodie said I would have enough to live on. I can do as well as that myself, thank you."

"No doubt," Jones snarled. "I am even sure you could do worse. It is extraordinary how much one can accomplish in refusing a dollar or two that might save another man's life. To hell with everybody! That is the noble attitude. I admire your spirit. A handful of bank-notes are crying at you: 'I'm yours, take me, give me to the wounded, to the starving!'

Not a bit of it. The Viscountess of Casa-Evora is too proud. That's superb."

Cassy turned on him. "See here, young man——"
"Don't you young man me," Jones irritably cut in. "In the rotunda out there, Dunwoodie gave me a foretaste of your swank and I can tell you I relished it. You won't look at a penny of this money because, if you did, you would be benefiting by an act committed by your father, who, as sure as you live, was impelled by the powers invisible to rid the earth of Paliser and to rid it of him for no other reason than that this money might serve a world in flames. Refused by you it will only revert to an old rounder who never did a good deed in his life; whereas, instead, it could call down blessings on your father's grave. But no, perish the thought! All that is leather and prunella to a young woman who regards herself as the arbiter of destiny. By God, you are prodigious!"

"I think you are horrid."

"So are you. You are the heiress to millions and millions. No wonder you put on airs."

Occasionally, to exceptional beings, a hand issuing from nowhere offers a cup brimming with madness, filled to the top with follies and dreams.

At that cup Cassy stared. It was unreal. If she tried to touch it, it would vanish.

"It is impossible!" she cried.

Jones looked about. "Where is my harp?"

Cassy did not know, she could not tell him. She had not even heard. A crater in the Wall Street sky had opened and from it, in an enchanted shower, fell sequins, opals, perfumes and stars.

But Jones must have found his harp. To that shower he was strumming an accompaniment.

"In to-day's paper there is a Red Cross appeal which says that what we give is gone. It is incredible, but educated people believe it. The ignorance of educated people is affecting. By reason of their education, which now and then includes mythology, they believe that happiness is the greatest of all the gifts that the gods can bestow. Being mortal, they try to obtain it. Being ignorant, they fail. Ignorance confounds pleasure with happiness. Pleasure comes from without, happiness from within. People may be very gay and profoundly miserable, really rich and terribly poor. In either case their condition is due to the fact that the happiness which they sought, they sought for themselves. Their error would be stupid were it not pathetic. In seeking happiness for themselves they fail to find it, but when they succeed in securing it for others, they find that on them also it has been bestowed. The money we give is not gone. It comes back to us. It returns in happiness and all the happiness that the richest, the poorest, the wisest, the stupidest can ever possess, is precisely that happiness which they have given away."

Where now where those doors? Cassy, the cascade of flowers and stars about her, looked at the harper. In listening to him, the doors had ceased to slam. About them there was peace. But her eyes had filled.

Jones was still at it.

"The greatest happiness is the cessation of pain. That pagan aphorism the Red Cross might put on its banners. Spiritually it is defective, but practically it is sound and some relief the Red Cross supplies. Give to it. You can put your money to no fairer use. It will hallow the grave where your father lies."

From beyond, from the adjacent Curb, came the shouts of brokers.

Jones, abandoning his harp, looked over at the girl. "What are you crying about?"

"I am not crying," spluttered Cassy, who was blubbering like a baby. "I never cry. It is disgusting of you to say so."

"You are crying."

"I am not crying," Cassy, indignantly sniffing and sobbing, snapped at him. Fiercely she rubbed her eyes. "It is none of your business, anyhow." Pausing, she choked, recovered and blearily added: "And, anyway, if the money is mine, really mine, honestly mine, I will give it away, all of it, every p—penny."

"No, no, not all of it," Jones hastily threw in, for now the door was opening and Dunwoodie appeared. "Keep a pear for your thirst, put a little million aside."

He turned to the lawyer. "Mrs. Paliser accepts her responsibilities."

"Hum! Ha!" The great man sat down and looked at Cassy. He looked many things but he said very few. "My dear young lady, familiar as you are with Latin, with law and with literature, who am I to remind you that chickens should first be hatched? Your rights may be contested. The Paliser Case, as it will be called, may——"

"The Paliser Case!" interjected Jones, who could see the headline from where he sat. "Shade of Blackstone! It will be famous! It will be filmed! The eminent jurist here will be screened and you, too, my lady."

Balefully Dunwoodie shot a glance at the inkbeast and another at Cassy.

"It may last some time. I have no doubt of the

result. None whatever. But in spite of your legal knowledge I suggest that you have associate counsel. Now, permit me to ask, would you care to retain me or would you prefer some one else?"

Cassy, who had dried her eyes, looked at him and it was remarkable how pretty she looked.

"Why, no, Mr. Dunwoodie, I would much rather have you, only——" Uncertainly she paused.

The eminent jurist took it up. "Only what?"

"Well, all I know about law is that it is very expensive and I have nothing except my grandfather's portrait."

Dunwoodie touched a button. "Ha! One moment."

A thin young man, with a pasty face and a slight stoop, opened the door.

The old ruffian raised a stubby finger. "Purdy, a cheque for a thousand dollars, to the order of Bianca Paliser, is to be mailed to this lady to-night."

"But, Mr. Dunwoodie!" Cassy exclaimed.

"You must allow me to be your banker," he told her, and turned again to the clerk. "Get Mr. Jeroloman. Say, with my compliments, I shall be obliged if he will look in here. And, Purdy, see to it that that cheque is attended to. Mrs. Paliser will give you her address."

"But, Mr. Dunwoodie!" Cassy exclaimed again, as the sallow youth went out.

To distract her attention, instantly Jones improvised a limerick. "There was a young man named Purdy, who was not what you'd call very sturdy. To be more of a sport, he drank gin by the quart, and danced on a hurdy-gurdy."

"You're insane," announced Cassy, who was a trifle demented herself.

Dunwoodie extracted his towel. "Jeroloman is the

attorney for the other side. He will want to meet Mrs. Paliser, but that honour will not be his to-day."

Cassy stood up. "I should hope not. He would be the last camel on the straw—I mean the last straw on the camel."

Dunwoodie, rising also, gave her his fine bow and to Jones a hand.

Then as the two made for the door, from over her shoulder she smiled back at him.

"My grandmother could not have been nicer."

"What do you mean by that?" Jones absently inquired.

But, in the rotunda now, Mr. Purdy was asking her address. If he had dared he would have followed her there. Fortune favouring, he would have followed her to the ends of the earth. It was what one of our allies calls the thunderbolt. Never before had he beheld such a face. Earnestly he prayed that he might behold it again. Allah is great. The prayer was granted.

In the cañon below, Jones, as he piloted her to the subway, pulled at his gloves.

"If I had the ability, I would write an opera, call it 'Danaë' and offer you the title-rôle."

Cassy, her thoughts on her grandmother, repeated it. "Danaë?"

"Yes, the lady disconnected by marriage with Jupiter who tubbed her in gold—gold ink, I suppose. But as I am not a composer I shall put you between the sheets—of a novel I mean. Fiction has its consolations."

But now, leaving the cañon, they entered a cavern which a tunnel fluted. There Cassy looked up at the inkbeast. "How is Mr. Lennox? Do you see him?"

"I find it very difficult not to. Unattached people are sticky as flies. When Lennox was engaged, he was invisible. Now he is all over the place."

From the tunnel a train erupted. It came with the belch of a monstrous beetle, red-eyed and menacing, hastening terribly to some horrible task.

Jones, shoving the girl into its bowels, added: "I was happier when he was jugged."

A corner beckoned. There, as the beetle resumed its flight, the novelist spread his wings.

"I would have wagered a red pippin that you couldn't say Jack Robinson before he and that young woman were convoluting joyously. I even planned to be best man. Saw my tailor about it. Whether it were on that account or not the Lords of Karma only know, but he told Miss Austen to go to hell."

Cassy started. From before her everything was receding.

Jones noting the movement, interpreted it naturally and therefore stupidly. He apologised.

"Forgive me. I picture you as Our Lady of the Immaculate Conversation. Forgive me, then. Besides, what Lennox did say, he said with less elegance. He said: 'I'm through.' Yes and asked me to repeat it to her. I studiously omitted to, but as Proteus—Mr. Blount in private life—somewhere expressed it, 'Hell has no more fixed or absolute decree.'"

Because of the crashing beetle Jones had to shout it. He shouted it in Cassy's ear. It was a lovely ear and Jones was aware of it. But only professionally. Since that night in Naples when, by way of keepsake, he got a dagger in his back, he had entertained the belief that a novelist should have everything, even to sex, in his brain. Such theories are very safe. Jones'

admirations were not therefore carnal. To Balzac, a pretty woman was a plot. Cassy was a plot to Jones, who continued to shout.

"If Lennox and Margaret Austen moved and had their being in a novel of mine, the wedding-bells would now be ringing at a cradle in the last chapter. Commercially it would be my duty to supply that happy and always unexpected touch. I even made a bet about it, which shows how iniquitous gambling is. What's more, it shows that I must have an unsuspected talent for picture-plays. As it was in heaven, so it is now in the movies. It is there that marriages are made. But forgive me again. I am talking shop."

The renewed apology was needless. Though Jones shouted, Cassy did not hear. It was not the clattering beetle that interfered. To that also Cassy was deaf. She heard nothing. The echo of noisy millions had gone. The slamming doors were silent. But her face was pale as running water when, the beetle at last abandoned, she thanked Jones for seeing her all the way.

All the way to where? God, if she only knew!

XXXV

LATER that day, Jeroloman, the attorney for the other side, who at the time had no idea that there was another side, or any side at all, entered the rotunda and asked for Dunwoodie.

In asking, he removed his hat, glanced at its glisten, put it on again. The hat was silk. It topped iron grey hair, steel-blue eyes, a turn-under nose, a thin-lipped mouth, a pointed chin, a stand-up collar, a dark neckcloth, a morning coat, grey gloves, grey trousers, drab spats and patent-leather boots. These attributes gave him an air that was intensely respectable, equally tiresome. One pitied his wife.

"This way, sir."

In the inner and airy office, Dunwoodie nodded, motioned at a chair.

"Ha! Very good of you to trouble."

Jeroloman, seating himself, again removed his hat. Before he could dispose of it, Dunwoodie was at him.

"Young Paliser's estate. In round figures what does it amount to?"

Jeroloman, selecting a safe place on the table, put the hat on it and answered, not sparringly, there was nothing to spar about, but with civil indifference: "Interested professionally?"

"His widow is my client."

Jeroloman's eyes fastened themselves on Dunwoodie, who he knew was incapable of anything that sa-

voured, however remotely, of shyism. But it was a year and a day since he had been closeted with him. In the interim, time had told. Diverting those eyes, he displayed a smile that was chill and dental.

"Well, well! We all make mistakes. There is no such person." He paused, awaiting the possible protest. None came and he added: "The morning after the murder, his father told me that the young man contemplated marriage with a lady who had his entire approval. Unfortunately——"

"Yaas," Dunwoodie broke in. "Unfortunately, as you say. The morning after was the 26th. On the 21st, a gardener, who pretended to be a clergyman, officiated at his marriage to my client."

Dryly but involuntarily Jeroloman laughed. Dunwoodie was getting on, getting old. In his day he had been remarkably able. That day had gone.

"Well, well! Even admitting that such a thing could have happened, it must have been only by way of a lark."

Dunwoodie whipped out his towel. "You don't say so!"

Carelessly Jeroloman surveyed him. He was certainly senile, yet, because of his laurels, entitled to all the honours of war.

"Look here, Mr. Dunwoodie. You are not by any chance serious, are you?"

"Oh, I'm looking. While I was about it, I looked into the case. *Per verba de præsenti*, my client consented to be young Paliser's wife. Now she is his widow."

Jeroloman weighed it. The weighing took but an instant. Dunwoodie was living in the past, but there

was no use in beating about the bush and he said 'as much.

"You are thinking of the common law, sir."

Absently Dunwoodie creased his towel. "Now you mention it, I believe I am."

Jeroloman glanced at his watch. It was getting late. His residence was five miles away. He was to dress, dine early and take his wife to the theatre. He would have to hurry and he reached for his hat.

"The common law was abrogated long ago."

Dunwoodie rumbled the towel. "Why, so it was!"

Jeroloman took the hat and with a gloved finger rubbed at the brim. "Even otherwise, the term common-law wife is not legally recognised. The law looks with no favour on the connection indicated by it. The term is synonymous for a woman who, having lived illicitly with a man, seeks to assume the relationship of wife after his death and thereby share in the proceeds of his property."

From under beetling brows, Dunwoodie looked at him. "Thanks for the lecture, Jeroloman. My client has no such desire. In this office, an hour ago, she refused them."

Jeroloman stood up. "Very sensible of her, I'm sure." He twirled the hat. "Who is she?"

"I thought I told you. She is Mrs. Paliser."

Jeroloman waved that hat. "Well, well! I thought I told you. As it is, if you will take the trouble to look at the laws of 1901, you will find that common-law marriages are inhibited."

"Hum! Ha! And if you will trouble to look at the Laws of 1907, you will find they are inhibited no longer."

Jeroloman stared. "I have yet to learn of it."

Dunwoodie repocketed his towel. "Is it possible? Then when the opportunity occurs you might inform yourself. At the same time let me recommend the Court of Appeals for March. You may find there additional instruction. But I see you are going. Don't let me detain you."

Jeroloman sat down. "What case are you referring to?"

"The Matter of Ziegler."

Uncertainly Jeroloman's steel-blue eyes shifted. "It seems to me I read the syllabus."

"Then your powers of concealment are admirable."

"But just what does it hold?"

"Can it be that you don't remember? Well, well! —to borrow your own agreeable mode of expression —it holds that common-law marriages that were valid before and until the enactments which you were good enough to cite, were again made valid by their appeal in Chapter 742 of the Laws of 1907."

"But," Jeroloman began and paused. "But——" He paused again.

Comfortably Dunwoodie helped him. "Yes?"

"You say that marriages valid before and until the Laws of 1901 are, by virtue of a repeal, now valid again?"

"That is what I say, Jeroloman. Merely that and nothing more. In addition to the Ziegler case, let me commend to you 'The Raven.'"

"Let's get down to facts, sir. From your account of it, this alleged marriage never could have been valid."

Dunwoodie wiped his mouth. "Dear me! I had no idea that my account of it could lead to such interesting views. You do surprise me."

"Mr. Dunwoodie, you said the ceremony was performed by a gardener who pretended to be a clergyman. Those were your very words."

"Yaas. Let the cat out of the bag, didn't I?"

Archly but chillily Jeroloman smiled. "Well, no, I would not care to put it in that way, but your office-boy must know that false representations void it."

"Good Lord!" Dunwoodie exclaimed. It was as though he had been hit in the stomach.

Jeroloman, who was eyeing him, gave a little nod that was tantamount to saying, "Take that!"

But Dunwoodie was recovering. He sat back, looked admiringly at Jeroloman, clasped his hands and twirled his thumbs.

Jeroloman, annoyed at the attitude and in haste to be going, pursed his thin lips. "Well, sir?"

With an affability that was as unusual as it was suspicious, Dunwoodie smiled at him. "Your objection is well taken. Not an hour ago, in that chair in which you are sitting, this lady, my client, who not once in her sweet life has opened the Revised Statutes, and who, to save it, could not tell the difference between them and the Code, well, sir, she entered that same objection."

"I don't see——"

"Nor did she, God bless her! And I fear I wearied her with my reasons for not sustaining it. But I did not tell her, what I may confide in you, that in Hays versus The People—25 New York—it is held immaterial whether a person who pretended to solemnise a marriage contract, was or was not a clergyman, or whether either party to the contract was deceived by false representations of this character. Hum! Ha!"

Jeroloman pulled at his long chin. In so doing he

rubbed his hat the wrong way. He did not notice. That he was to dress, dine early, take his wife to the theatre, that it was getting late and that his residence was five miles away, all these things were forgotten. What he saw were abominations that his client would abhor—the suit, the notoriety, the exposure, the whole dirty business dumped before the public's greedy and shining eyes.

"Who is she?" he suddenly asked.

"Who was she?" Dunwoodie corrected. "Miss Cara."

Jeroloman started and dropped his hat. "Not——?"

Dunwoodie nodded. "His daughter."

Jeroloman, bending over, recovered his hat. Before it, a picture floated. It represented an assassin's child gutting the estate of a son whom the father had murdered. It was a bit too cubist. Somewhere he had seen another picture of that school. It showed a young woman falling downstairs. He did not know but that he might reproduce it. At least he could try. Meanwhile it was just as well to take the model's measure and again his eyes fastened on Dunwoodie.

"What do you suggest?"

Dunwoodie, loosening his clasped hands, beat with the fingers a tattoo on his waistcoat.

"Let me see. There is 'The Raven,' the first primer, the multiplication table. Is it for your enlightenment that you ask?"

Jeroloman moistened his lips. Precise, careful, capable, intensely respectable, none the less he could have struck him. A moment only. From the sleeve of his coat he flicked, or affected to flick, a speck.

"Yes, thank you, for my enlightenment. You have not told me what your client wants."

"What a woman wants is usually beyond masculine comprehension."

Methodically Jeroloman dusted his hat. "You might enquire. We, none of us, favour litigation. In the interests of my client I always try to avoid it and, while at present I have no authority, yet—— Well, well! Between ourselves, how would a ponderable amount, four or five thousand, how would that do?"

Blandly Dunwoodie looked at this man, who was trying to take Cassy's measure.

"For what?"

"To settle it."

That bland air, where was it? In its place was the look which occasionally the ruffian turned on the Bench.

"Hum! Ha! Then for your further enlightenment let me inform you that my client will settle it for what she is legally entitled to, not one ponderable dollar more, not one ponderable copper less."

Mentally, from before that look, Jeroloman was retreating. Mentally as well, already he had reversed himself. He had judged Dunwoodie old, back-number, living in the past. Instead of which the fossil was what he always had been—just one too many. Though not perhaps for him. Not for Randolph F. Jeroloman. Not yet, at any rate. The points advanced were new, undigested, perhaps inexact, filled with discoverable flaws. Though, even so, how M. P. would view them was another kettle of fish. But that was as might be. He put on his hat and stood up.

"Very good. I will give the matter my attention."

"Do," Dunwoodie, with that same look, retorted, "And meanwhile I will apply for letters of adminis-

tration. Hum! Ha! My compliments to your good lady."

He turned in his chair. Attention, indeed! He knew what that meant. The matter would be submitted to M. P. The old devil had not a leg to stand on, he lacked even a crutch, and in that impotent, dismembered and helpless condition he would be thrown out of court. A ponderable amount! Hum!

For a moment he considered the case. But it may be that already it had been heard and adjudged. Long since, perhaps, at some court of last resort, the Paliser Case had been decided.

XXXVI

ON the morrow, Jeroloman waited on his client, who received him in the library, an agreeable room in which there was nothing literary, but which succeeded at once in becoming extremely unpleasant.

M. P. was in tweeds. When his late lamented departed this life, he wore crêpe on his hat for ninety days. It was a tribute that he paid, not to the lady's virtues, which were notoriously absent; nor to any love of her, for he had disliked her exceedingly; nor yet because it was conventional, he hated conventionality; but, by Gad, sir, because it bucks the women up! All that was long ago. Since then he had become less fastidious. At his son's funeral he appeared in black.

Now, on this day, dressed in tweeds, he greeted Jeroloman with his usual cordiality.

"I hope to God you are not going to bother me about anything?"

The wicked old man, who had faced wicked facts before, faced a few of them then. The stench of the main fact had been passing from him, deodorised by the fumigating belief that his son had been killed by a lunatic. Now here it was again, more mephitic than ever, and for the whiffs of it with which Jeroloman was spraying him, he hated the man.

"Whom has she?"

"Dunwoodie."

He reviewed the bar. There was Bancroft, whose

name was always in the papers and to whom clients flocked. There was Gwathmay, whom the papers ignored and whom only lawyers consulted. He might have either or both, the rest of the crew as well, and in spite of them all, unless he permitted himself to be done, the publicity would be just as resounding.

In the old nights, when social New York was a small and early, threats had amused him. "I have my hours for being blackmailed, this is not one of them," he had lightly remarked at a delightful gang. "Do your damndest."

They took him at his word and so completely that the small and early saw him no more. What was that to him? There were other pastures, less scrumptious perhaps, but also far less fatiguing. He had not cared, not a rap. Behind him the yard of brass yodled in a manner quite as lordly as before. His high-steppers lost none of their sheen; his yacht retained all its effulgence; so, too, did the glare of his coin. No, he had not cared. But that was long ago, so long that it might have happened in an anterior existence. He had not cared then. Age is instructive. He had learned to since. Moreover, in testimony of his change of heart, a miracle had been vouchsafed. The affair at the Opera, attributed to a lunatic, had been buried safely, like his son, the scandal tossed in for shroud. How freely he had breathed since then! The little green bottle of menthe he had barely touched. He might live to see everything forgiven or, what is quite as satisfactory, forgotten. And now! Columns and columns, endlessly, day in, day out; the Paliser Case dragged from one court to another, the stench of it exceeded only by that of the Huns! But, by comparison, blackmail, however bit-

ter, was sweet. When one may choose between honey and gall, decision is swift.

"What'll she take?"

Jeroloman, who had left his hat on the malachite bench in the hall, smoothed his gloves. He was about to reply. Before he could, his client shook a fist at him.

"The slut hasn't a cent. Came to the Place with a bundle, damn her. A suit like this costs something. Where's she going to get it? What'll she take?"

Jeroloman looked up from his gloves. "I don't know."

"Then find out."

"I offered Dunwoodie a ponderable amount."

"Well?"

"He refused it."

"Double it, then, triple it."

"Mr. Paliser, I'm sorry, but it won't do."

"Damnation, why not?"

"It is all or nothing with him and maybe nothing in the end. I told him so. I told him that the courts view with no favour a woman who, having lived illicitly with a man, claims, on his demise, to be his widow. Such a claim is but the declaration of a woman entered after the death of her alleged husband and, as such, is inadmissible under Section 829 of the Code. I have posted myself very thoroughly in the matter, though I find it has been held——"

"Damn what has been held. It's all or nothing, is it?"

Jeroloman pulled at his long chin.

All, the wicked old man reflected. All! All would be ten million and ten million was less than a tenth of his wealth—ten million for which he had no earthly

need, which it would fatigue him to spend, burden him to hoard, disgrace him to fight for, and which, normally, would go to a brat whom he had never seen and whom, as next in line, he hated.

Already he had decided. Though, it may be that on planes of which he knew nothing, long since it had been decided for him.

None the less it hurt. It hurt horribly. From a pocket, he drew a little bottle.

"Settle it then."

"On what basis?"

"All and be damned to her."

But now the menthe that he had raised to his lips was trickling from the bottle, staining his tweeds. He hiccoughed, gasped, motioned.

"And good-day to you."

Below, on the malachite bench, a silk hat was waiting. When that hat again appeared in Dunwoodie's office, the Paliser Case was over. It had ended before it began.

XXXVII

CASSY sat in the kitchen. Before her were a cheque and a letter. The letter was from the theatre-man. The cheque was Dunwoodie's. The cheque begged to be cashed, the letter begged her to call.

During the night she had gone looking along an avenue where there were houses with candid windows from which faces peered and smiled. But it was not for these that she was looking and she awoke in a tempest of farewells.

Now, across the court, in the kitchen opposite, were two inoffensive beings. On that evening when her father had made her cry, they had seemed unreal. On this forenoon their baseless appearance persisted. But their unreality was not confined to them. Their kitchen, the court, the building shared it. They were all unreal, everything was, except one thing only, which perhaps was more unreal than all things else.

She looked at the letter and from it at the cheque. The day before, on returning from the shower of millions that had caught and drenched her in Broad Street, she was not entirely dry. The glisten of the golden rain hung all about her. None the less on reaching the walk-up she forgot it. There were other matters, more important, that she had in mind. But only a philosopher could be drenched as she had been and remain unaffected. The bath is too voluptuous for the normal heart. On its waters float argosies crimson-hulled, purple-rigged, freighted with dreams

come true. You have but a gesture to make. Those dreams are spaniels crouching at your feet. At a bath not dissimilar but financially far shallower, Monte Cristo cried: "The world is mine!" It was very amusing of him. But though, since then, values have varied, a bagatelle of ten millions is deep enough for any girl, sufficiently deep at least for its depths to hold strange things.

At those things, strange indeed and yet not unfamiliar, Cassy beckoned. In their embrace she saw herself, as Jones had pictured her, going about, giving money away, strewing it full-handed, changing sobs into smiles. The picture lacked novelty. Often she had dreamed it. Only recently, on the afternoon just before the clock struck twelve, just before the gardener lit his pipe and the mask had fallen, only then, and, relatively, that was but yesterday, she had promenaded in it. It was a dream she had dreamed when a child, that had haunted her girlhood, that had abided since then. It was the dream of a dream she had dreamed without daring to believe in its truth. Now, from the core of the web that is spun by the spiderous fates, out it had sprung. There, before her eyes, within her grasp was that miracle, a rainbow solidified, vapour made tangible, a dream no longer a dream but a palette and a palette that you could toss in the air, put in the bank, secrete or squander, a palette with which you could paint the hours and make them twist to jewelled harps. No more walk-up! Good-bye, kitchy! Harlem, addio! The gentleman with the fabulous nose could whistle. Vaudeville, indeed! She could buy the shop, buy a dozen of them, tear them down, build them up, throw them into one and sing there, sing what she liked, when she liked, as she liked. Yes, but for whom? God of gods, for whom?

A local newspaper bears—or bore—a sage device: *La nuit porte conseil*. That night, on her white bed, in her black room, Cassy sought it. But the counsel that night brings is not delivered while you toss about. Night waits until you sleep. Then, to the subjective self that never sleeps, the message is delivered. It may be fallible, often it is and, in our scheme of things, what is there that is not? Yet in any dilemma bad advice may be better than none. Then, without transition, the black room changed into an avenue where faces peered and smiled. It was not though for these that she was looking, but for her way. It must have been very narrow. Though she looked and looked she could not find it. Yet it was near, perhaps just around the corner. But in some manner, she could not reach it. Sleep sank her deeper. When she awoke, there it was.

Now as she sat in the kitchen, before which, in the kitchen opposite, bundles of baseless appearances came and went, she began counting her wealth on her fingers. Youth! Up went her thumb. Health! The forefinger. Lungs! The second finger. Not being a fright! The fourth. How rich she was! But was there not something else? Oh, yes! Sadly she smiled. A clear conscience! She had forgotten that and that came first. Youth, health, lungs, looks, these were gamblers' tokens in the great roulette of life. In the hazards of chance at any moment she might lose one or all, as eventually she must lose them and remain no poorer than before. But her first asset which she had counted last, that was her fortune, the estate she held by virtue of a trust so guardedly created that if she lost one mite, the whole treasure was withdrawn.

On the washtub—covered admirably with linoleum—at which she sat, were the cheque for a thousand

dollars and the bid from the vaudeville man. The bid, she knew, meant money. But the cheque would beggar her.

She drew breath and sat back. From above a filter of sunlight fell and told her it was noon. Across the court the bundles of baseless appearances transformed themselves into a real woman, an actual child. The kitchen in which they moved, the house in which they dwelled were no longer the perceptions of a perceiver. They also were real. So, too, was life.

An hour and Mr. Purdy's pasty face turned feebly red. He stammered it.

No, unfortunately, Mr. Dunwoodie was out. Would Mrs. Paliser wait? In Mr. Dunwoodie's private office? And the 'Herald' perhaps or the 'Times'—or—

Everything there, Broad Street to boot, the Stock Exchange included, Mr. Purdy was ready and anxious to offer.

No, Mrs. Paliser would not wait—and mentally she thanked her stars for it. But would Mr. Purdy do something for her?

Would he! The brave spirit of Talleyrand must have animated that sickly young man. If what Mrs. Paliser desired were possible it would be done: if impossible, it was done already.

Cassy gave him the rare seduction of her smile. She also was entertaining an emotion or two. She had not at all known where she would find the strength to confront and confute a grandmotherly old ruffian. But luck was with her. He was out.

So very good of Mr. Purdy then and would he please give Mr. Dunwoodie this cheque and say she's sorry she can't accept it or the other money either? She had said she would, but, really, it was not intended

for her. Supposing she took it. She would feel like a thief in a fog. Exactly that. A thief in a fog. No, she couldn't. Couldn't and wouldn't. Just as grateful though to Mr. Dunwoodie. Her regrets to him and a thousand thanks.

"And good-day, Mr. Purdy. I thank you also."

Mr. Purdy, flushing feebly, saw her to the door, saw her to the hall without. There, while he waited with her for a descending lift, a silk hat that had just come from a malachite bench, alighted from an ascending one. Immediately the other lift took her.

"Who was that?" the hat's owner alertly asked.

Mr. Purdy rubbed his perspiring hands. "Mrs. Paliser."

Jeroloman wheeled like a rat. He looked at the cage. It had vanished. He looked at the other. Above it a moving finger pointed upward. Cold-blooded, meticulously precise, intensely respectable, none the less, for one delirious second, madness seized him. He wished to God he could hurry down, overtake the impostor, lure her into his own office, frighten her out of such wits as she possessed and buy her off for tuppence. Instantly Respectability had him by the collar. He could not. Precision gave him a kick. Wouldn't stand if he did.

Deeply he swore. The millions were gone. Hands down, without a struggle, the Paliser estate was rooked. No fault of his though, and mechanically he adjusted that hat. Damn her!

In the street below, superbly, with sidereal indifference, the sun shone down on the imbecile activities of man. The storm of the day before that had drenched Cassy so abundantly, had been blown afar, blown from her forever. The sky in which a volcano had formed was remote and empty.

"Ouf!" Cassy muttered in relief and muttered, too: "Now for the agent!"

She had reached the corner. Just beyond was the subway. It would land her within two squares of the man's greasy office. Now, though, suddenly, she felt a gnawing. A sandwich would taste good. Two sandwiches would taste better. Then, quite as suddenly, that vision, the street with it, everything, except one thing only, vanished.

Blocking the way stood Lennox.

"Where to in such a hurry?"

Easily she smiled and told him. "I'm going to buy a rhinoceros." But for all the easiness of it her tongue nearly tripped. "And what are you doing?"

"I? Oh! Cleaning up."

Wall Street is not a Japanese tea-garden. It lacks the klop-klop of fountains. Yet, even in its metallic roar there may—for exceptional beings—be peace there. Not for Cassy, though. She could have screamed.

A moment only. Lennox turned and both moved on.

"Let's get out of this."

Cassy looked up at him. "You forget my little errand."

"Ah, yes! The rhinoceros. Couldn't you ask me to meet him?"

"I shall be giving dinner-parties for him every evening. Would you care to come?"

They had reached cavernous steps down which Cassy was going.

Lennox raised his hat. "I will come to-night."

Through the metallic roar, the four words dropped and hummed.

XXXVIII

IT is going to be splendid. There will be candles!" —a young person, dead since but still living, exclaimed of her poet's fête. The fête, however lavish, and which you will find reported by Murger, was not held in a kitchen. The poet's garret did not contain a kitchen. That was Paris.

Hereabouts, nowadays, walk-ups are more ornate. Cassy's dinner that night was served on rich linoleum and not out of snobbishness either but because the table had gone from the living-room and though the piano remained one could not very well dine on that, or, for that matter, on the sofa. There are details into which a hostess never enters. Cassy—in black chiffon—did not offer any and Lennox—in evening clothes—did not ask. He had never dined in a kitchen before and, so far as the present historian knows not to the contrary, he did not dine in one again. But he enjoyed the experience. There was cold chicken, a salad, youth, youth's wine and running laughter. For dessert, a remark.

The rich linoleum then had been abandoned for the other room where Cassy sat on the sofa and Lennox on the one surviving chair. Beyond was the piano. Additionally, in some neighbourly flat, a phonograph performed.

Among these luxuries sweets were served. A question preceded them.

"Do you remember the afternoon you were in my rooms?"

Yes, Cassy remembered it.

Then came the remark. "That afternoon I laughed. Until to-night—except once—I haven't laughed since then."

Very good dessert, with more to follow.

"When you went, the sunlight went with you. It went out at your heels like a dog. I was thinking about it recently. I don't seem to have seen the sunlight again, until it played about your rhinoceros."

There are sweets that are bitter. Cassy took one.

"Mr. Jones told me. It does seem such a pity, such a great pity. I saw her once and I could see she was not merely good to look at but really good, good through and through."

"May I smoke?" Lennox asked.

Had he wished he could have stood on his head. Cassy nodded at him. He got out a cigar.

"Miss Austen is all you say. She is a saint. A man doesn't want a saint. A man wants flesh and blood."

Cassy took another bitter-sweet. "She's that. Any one would know it."

Lennox bit at the cigar. "Too good for me, though. So good that she threw me over."

Cassy put a finger through it. "She did not understand. Any girl might have done the same."

Sombrely Lennox considered her. "Would you? You say she did not understand. I know well enough she did not. But if you cared for a man, would you throw him over because of a charge which you could not be sure was true and without giving him a chance to disprove it? Would you?"

He could stand on his head, yes, but it was unfair to grill her. She flushed.

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"How, you don't see?"

"Isn't it obvious? Miss Austen and I move in different worlds. On any subject our views might differ and I don't mean at all but that hers would be superior."

"There can be but one view of what's square."

"I am sure she meant to be."

Unconcernedly, Lennox smiled. The smile lit his face. From sombre it became radiant.

"That's all very well. The point is what you would think. Would you think it square to throw a man over as she threw me?"

Cassy showed her teeth. "If I didn't care for him, certainly I would."

"But if you did?"

That was too much. Cassy exclaimed at it. "If! If! How can I tell? I don't know. I lack experience."

"But not heart."

He was right about that, worse luck. How it beat, too! It would kill her though to have him suspect it.

"I do wish you would tell me," he added.

Cassy, casting about, felt like an imbecile and said brilliantly: "Haven't you a match? Shall I fetch one?"

Lennox extracted a little case. "Thanks. It's an answer I'd like."

It was enough to drive you mad and again casting about, but not getting it, she hedged.

"It will have to be in the abstract, then."

"Very good. Let's have it in the abstract."

Yet even in the abstract! However, with an uplift of the chin that gave her, she felt, an air of discussing a matter in which she had no concern at all, she plunged.

"One never knows, don't you know, but it seems to me that if by any chance I did care for a man—not that it is in the least presumable that I ever shall—but if I did, why, then, no. He couldn't get rid of me, not unless he tried very hard, but if he didn't, then no matter what I heard, no matter how true it might be, I would cling to his coat-tails, that is, if he wore them, and if, also, he cared for a ninny like me."

Cassy paused, shook her docked hair and solemnly resumed: "Which, of course, he couldn't."

"I knew you would say that."

"Say what?" Previously flushed, she reddened. But there is a God. The room had grown dim.

"That you wouldn't cut and run."

She could have slapped him. "Then why did you ask me?"

Lennox blew a ring of smoke.

"To have you see it as I do. To have you see that at the first flurry Miss Austen ran to cover. I am quite sure I could show her that she ran too quick, but I am equally sure it is a blessing that she did run. It is not ambitious of a man to want a girl who will stand her ground. Sooner or later some other flurry would have knocked the ground from under and then it might have been awkward. This one let me out."

He stood up, opened the window, dropped the cigar from it. The cigar might have been Margaret Austen.

"What are your plans?" he asked and sat again.

Ah, how much safer that was! Cassy grabbed at it.

"You are the third person to ask me. First, Mr. Jones. Then—then——" But she did not want to mention Dunwoodie or anything about the great cascade of gorgeous follies and she jumped them both. "Then an agent. He asked me yesterday and to-day

he had a contract for me and a cheque in advance. He is a very horrid little man but so decent!"

"When does it begin?"

"The engagement? Next week. What plans have you?"

"A few that have been made for me. Presently we sail."

"For France?"

"For France."

It was cooler now, at least her face was, and she got up and switched the light.

"I wish I might go, too," she told him. "But I lack the training to be nurse and the means to be vivandière—canteener, I think they call it." She hesitated and added. "Shall I see you before you go?"

But now from the phonograph in the neighbourly flat, the *Non te scordar* drifted, sung nobly by some fat tenor who probably loathed it.

Lennox, who had risen with her, asked: "May I come to-morrow?"

The aria enveloped them and for a moment Cassy trilled in.

"Perhaps to-morrow you will sing for me," he continued.

"Yes, I'll sing."

Later, in the black room on the white bed, the fat tenor's tuneful prayer floated just above her. Cassy repeated the words and told herself she was silly. She may have been, but also she was tired. She knew it and for a moment wondered why. Painted hours dancing to jewelled harps are not to be sneezed at. But when they are not yours, when you have really no right to them, it is not fatiguing to say so. A gesture does not fatigue. It is certainly taxing to go to a greasy office, sign your name and receive a cheque.

Taxing but endurable. It is not that that does you up. It is argument that tires you, particularly when there is no need for any and you are forced to turn yourself inside out. How fortunate it was, though, that the room had been dark! In the balm of that, sleep took her.

The next day she had many things to do and succeeded in botching most of them. I have no mind for anything, she decided. What is the matter with me? But, at least, when at last she opened the door for him, there was nothing amiss with her appearance.

In the room where the piano was, she sat down on the bench and smiled up at him. "Shall I sing now?"

Lennox put his hat on the sofa. "If you don't mind my talking to you."

"Very good, we will have a duo."

Over the keys her fingers moved, sketching a melody, passing from it into another.

Beside the bench Lennox had drawn the only chair. He looked about, then at her.

"I remember so well the first time I came here."

Her lips tightened, but, suppressing the smile, she turned to him and said and so patiently:

"Is it a song without words you want, or words without song?"

Lennox leaned toward her. It was then or, it might be, never.

"It is you I want."

Cassy turned from him. Her fingers, prompted by a note, had gone from it into Gounod.

"Will you marry me?"

"Certainly not."

It was as though he had asked her to go skating. To mark the absurdity of it her voice mounted.

"Le printemps chasse les hivers——"

The words are imbecile but the air, which is charming, seemed to occupy her wholly.

"Et sourit dans les arbres verts——"

"I know you don't care for me but couldn't you try?"

"Eh?" Cassy stayed her fingers, reached for a score on the top of the upright. "I thought you wanted me to sing."

"I want to know whether you can't ever care for me."

It sang about her like a flute. Something else was singing, not the bird in her throat, for she had hushed it, but a bird in her heart. It had been singing ever since he had entered the room. It had been singing with her the duo of which lightly she had spoken. But it was singing too loud.

Hastily she replaced the score, pulled at another, shoved it back.

"Won't you tell me?" Lennox was asking.

It will burst, she thought. Sidling from the bench, she went to the sofa, looked at it as though she had never seen it before, and sat down.

"Won't you?" he repeated.

She glanced over at him. Apparently now she was calm as you please.

"People marry out of optimism, or at any rate I did. I have had my lesson, thank you."

Lennox stood up. "You have suffered——"

"I read somewhere," she cut in, "that we have to suffer terribly before we learn not to suffer at all." Pausing, she added: "I suppose then we are dead."

She was getting away from it and he rounded on her.

"See here! We have both been in hell, but that's

over. Even otherwise, hell would not be hell to me if I were in it with you."

Thump! Thump! It was worse than ever. None the less she looked cool as a cucumber.

"The prospect is not very tempting. Besides, even if it were——" Again she paused, but this time without getting on with it.

He came toward her. "Even if it were what?"

"Temptation has its dangers. It may lead to captivity."

"And you fear that?"

"For you, yes."

"For me!" he exclaimed.

How it thumped! It thumped so that it hurt, yet spartanly she contrived to smile.

"You or any one. I was speaking generally. Then, too, you know, hell may not be all your fancy pictures it."

He floundered in it. "What do you mean?"

"In no time you might get sick to death of me."

"Never!"

The denial exploded with such violence that the walls fell. Or at least so it seemed to Cassy. It seemed to her that the room had become a tent of fulgurant colours. They were blinding. She could not look at them. How delicious it all was, though! In spite of which, she sighed.

"Well, there is no telling. Some day I may go and take a look there."

With mounting astonishment he repeated it. "Some day! But, if you ever will, why not now?"

Her eyes then were on him. "To find out."

"Find out what?"

"How you felt about it."

"But how could you, if you don't care for me?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you told me so."

Innocently, with an air of wonder, she took it up. "Did I? I don't think so. I am sure I did not. I am convinced that I would not have volunteered it and I am certain you did not ask."

"I asked you a moment ago."

If I don't make it stop, she thought, it will jump out. What shall I do?

"And I ask you again," he gravely continued.

It was in her throat. Try as she might she could not choke it back. Out it came.

"I have never cared for any one else."

Lennox stared. It was incredible. Like many another it was incredible to him that he should have sought afar for what was at his side.

But not having finished, she resumed. "And I never shall."

To that there could be but one reply. It was rough enough. Cassy did not mind, but she freed herself, undulantly, as a woman can.

Unrebuffably Lennox renewed it. "Let's be married at once."

Cassy smoothed her rumpled hair. "No." The monosyllable fell like a stone.

Lennox kicked it. "In God's name, why not?"

Cassy turned away. It was the hardest of all. Beside it, what was the gesture of the day before?

"Because. Just because."

"Because why?"

"Because I could not live to see you regret it."

"But why should I? I never shall." His hands on her shoulders, violently his eyes probed her own.

She thought him so dear, but she said: "I have not cared for any one else. You have. The growth of

love is slow. You cannot love me now as I love you."

He wanted to shake her and nearly did. "But when you find I do?"

"Ah, when that day comes, I will."

"And meanwhile?"

She just plucked at his sleeve. Nothing could have been more yielding. It was yielding as water, and yielding still, her eyes fell.

"For your sake only. Later—if—if——"

Any great astonishment is dumb and, at the moment, a whirlwind tossed his thoughts. In the swirling gale were sudden pictures; the girl's fair arms, the delight of her lips, his own desire. Tumultuously they passed. Before him flew the hazards of life, of death, and, curling there, the iniquity of leaving her afterward, as leave her he must, alone to face them. The counterblast steadied him. Astonishment may be dumb, love is clairvoyant.

"For your own sake, no. The war cannot last forever and if I return, then—then——"

Shortly, among the Victorian horrors of his gloomy rooms, she came to see him off.

Mrs. Austen, who heard of everything, heard of that. "I always knew it!" she exclaimed. The dear woman had known nothing of the kind and her perspicacity amazed her.

But this has nothing to do with the Paliser Case which ended before it began.

